NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.



BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016



FIGURE—by MICHAEL ANGELO

00081253

A

HAND-BOOK

FOR

YOUNG PAINTERS.

BY C. R. LESLIE, R.A.,

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF CONSTABLE."

E1253

ac

"To admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality."—COLERIDGE, *Biographia Literaria.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

S e 13

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1855.

The Proprietor reserves to himself the right of authorising a Translation of this Work.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
ANGEL-COURT, SKINNER STREET.

PREFACE.

If, from all that has been written on Painting, the truth could be brought out and presented clear from every ambiguity of language, the student of the present day would stand in little need of further guidance to its true principles. It is not from the want of sound dicta, or because enough has not been given to the world in the way of theory and criticism, that something still remains to be said; but it is because far too much has been written; and because it is the nature of error to be more prolific than truth; and because those points on which the best writers may be mistaken, or what has more frequently happened those points on which they have been mistaken by inferior minds, have generally become starting-places from which plausible, but unsound, criticism has spread itself out through all the avenues of the popular literature of the day.

The Fine Arts are often selected as themes affording opportunities for the display of eloquence and learning; and in apparently profound dissertations accompanied often with much valuable information, theories are not unfrequently advanced utterly adverse to the

right progress of Art,—theories the more dangerous for the talents with which they are advocated; and from the peculiar fashions at present dominant in criticism, I have no hesitation in expressing my conviction that the thing, just now, most in danger of being neglected by painters is the *Art of Painting;* and that want of patronage is far less to be dreaded than the want of that which patronage should foster.

The road to Art is proverbially a long one; and it is often made longer than it need be, not only by the causes I have mentioned, but by our own mistakes. If, therefore, anything I can say should tend to shorten it to younger artists, it will be in a great measure owing to discoveries of some of my own errors,—which, though made too late to be of much benefit to myself, may possibly be of use to those whose habits are not so formed but that they may be abandoned, if wrong.

Painting and Poetry, as Sister Arts, have a family likeness; but it is the business of each to do what the other cannot; and words can no more become substitutes for pictures than lines and colours can supply the place of Poetry. Hence the difficulty of writing or speaking of Painting; indeed the *impossibility* of describing those things belonging to it that are most impressive. Yet Language may do something for Art. It may direct the student in all that is mechanical and scientific, and principles of Nature, as far as they are known, may be explained; and, as we may believe Ben Jonson when he tells us, that

"——— a good poet 's made, as well as born,"

we may be sure that this is equally true of a good painter.

The great difficulty of instruction will be found in attempting to analyze the things that are most addressed to the taste and the feelings. Here the teacher must rely on his own impressions; impressions liable to be biassed by a thousand accidental associations, and by peculiarities of temperament that may well lead him to mistrust himself; and he can only be sure that his guidance will be safe to others in as far as he finds his opinions confirmed by the most generally-received authorities.

If, with respect to one most important element of Art, and that too colour, I dissent from so great a painter as Reynolds, I do but follow Opie, whose opinion has carried with it that of every succeeding artist of eminence.

The Lectures I delivered at the Royal Academy form the greater part of this volume. They have been carefully revised, and re-cast into other forms; and with such additional matter as I venture to hope may render it worthy of the attention, not only of young artists, but, in some degree, of painters past the period of pupilage, and also of that now large and increasing class of lovers of Art who adorn their houses with pictures.

If I owe any apology for what I have said of some late purchases of pictures for the National Gallery, I owe it to the public for not saying more. For the Trustees of the collection, as noblemen and gentlemen, I have the greatest respect. But I can have no respect

for their taste (as a body) when they throw away the public money on worthless pictures. It is clearly not sufficient that there should be, as there always have been, among these gentlemen, one or two who know the difference between good and bad Art; and whose professional or non-professional acquaintance with the works of the great masters, enables them to judge of the value or originality of the pictures that may be offered to the nation, either as gifts or in the way of purchase; for when the pictures to which I have alluded were added to the Gallery, such gentlemen must have been absent or out-voted. The abilities required to govern a country are so far from including the accomplishments necessary to the formation of a fine collection of works of Art, that it may be safely asserted they are scarcely compatible; and the taste and knowledge of this kind, even of a Pericles or a Lorenzo de Medici, must always be as nothing, compared with the taste, and knowledge of an artist. I may be told that some of our eminent statesmen of the last generation have formed fine collections of the old masters; but such collections were, in fact, formed for them by the late Mr. Seguier, and Mr. Smith, the elder, of Bond Street.

I have spoken out on this matter, from a sense of duty to the public, as well as to my professional brethren, to whom, above all others, it is important that such an institution as a National Gallery should be properly managed.

C. R. L.

December, 1854.

CONTENTS.

SECTION I.

PAGE

ON THE IMITATION OF NATURE, AND ON STYLE. . 1

Comparison of Art with Nature.—Examination of the axiom that the most perfect Art is that in which Art is most concealed. — The works of Rubens suggestive of action, Hogarth's "Enraged Musician" suggestive of sound. —Wax-work, its lifelessness.—Deception differs from illusion.—Panoramic and Dioramic Art.—Imitation defined by Coleridge.—Painting not an invention. — Error in the reasoning of Lessing.—Tableaux vivants.—Inferiority of Gerard Dow to Terburg, Metsu, or Jan Steen.—Style.—Manner.—Mediæval Art. — Chinese Art.—Sameness not always a fault.

SECTION II.

ON THE IMITATION OF ART. 17

Judgments of young Painters.—Apparent present advantages of study.—Real difficulties.—Defects in the minds of different classes of students.—Faith in the inexhaustibleness of Nature necessary to originality.—The overpowering Influence of contemporary Art on students.—Danger of resorting to exhibitions of modern pictures as to schools. — Poets not necessarily judges of Painting.—Mischief done by pretenders to Taste.—Statesmen and princes rarely judges of Art.—Misemployment of Michael Angelo by Leo X.—The poetry of Painting.—The "Cephalus and Aurora" of Poussin.—Tintoret.—Poussin's "Polyphemus."—Importance of technical excellence.—Misapplication of the word sensual.—Remarks of Lord Lindsay.—

PAGE

Fra Angelico.—Heads of angels by Reynolds.—Quotation from Dr. Waagen.—The Expression of Hogarth aided by his colour.—Purchases of worthless pictures by the Trustees of the National Gallery.—Francia compared with Correggio. — Eclecticism of the greatest painters.—Plagiarism.

SECTION III.

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAWS AND RULES. . 39

Genius not lawless.—The laws of Art and of Nature the same. — Rules not binding. — Debate of the French Academy on a picture by P. Veronese.—Sterne on criticism.—"Last Supper" of Leonardo di Vinci.—Watteau.—Dr. Johnson and Miss Burney.—Quotation from Johnson's preface to Shakespear. — The violation of rules in obedience to laws.—How the prosperity of Art may be promoted.—Instances of laws.—Drawing school and amateur rules.

SECTION IV.

ON CLASSIFICATION. 51

Quotation from Charles Lamb.—Sancho Panza's Story.—M. Angelo and Raphael.—The *subjective* element.—Vulgarity.—Morland not vulgar.—Pretension the essence of vulgarity.—French Painters of the eighteenth century.—Poussin. — Watteau. — The *objective* element. — Caravaggio.—Rembrandt.—Fuseli. — Blake.—High Art.—Religious Art. — The levelling tendency of classification according to subject.—Raphael. — Masaccio. — Ostade.—Rembrandt.—Carlo Dolci.—Carlo Maratti, &c.

SECTION V.

ON SELF-TEACHING. 64

Fashion.—Opie supposed to be self-taught.—Examination of this opinion. — Alderman Boydell. — His Shakespear Gallery.—His patronage of Opie.—Northcote's "Slighted Beauty."—Michael Angelo, origin of his style.—Raphael.—Rubens.—Sir Joshua Reynolds on genius and industry.

PAGE

SECTION VI.

ON GENIUS, IMAGINATION, AND TASTE. . . . 71

Genius a combination of many faculties. — Taste. — Its rarity.—The superior taste of Raphael. — Finish determined by taste.—Velasquez. — Terburg.—Cold natures, their taste.—Ardent temperaments. — Bad taste.—Good and bad tastes often united. — The revivals of Art are always with a difference of its character.

SECTION VII.

ON THE IDEAL, AND ON BEAUTY OF FORM. . . 76

The Ideal not always distinct from matter-of-fact.—The Elgin horses. — Faults in Flaxman's animals.— The Ideal is the select. — It is not the beautiful only.—Raphael.—The Greeks. — Angelico.—The connection between modern and ancient Art never lost.—How the antique should be studied.—Guido's "Aurora."—Raphael, the painter of *loveliness*.—Statue of Thalia.—M. Angelo's Delphic Sibyl.—Perfect human beauty not to be found in an individual, and why?—Proportions of the figure relatively beautiful.—Grace, also relative. — Beauty of old age.—Of disease.—Of calamity.—Of death.—Lord Byron's remarks on death. — Cast from the face of Napoleon.—Mistakes made by Artists in representations of death.

SECTION VIII.

ON DRAWING. 88

All schools, in which drawing the figure is taught, begin with the study of the antique. — Reynolds's suggestion that students should paint their studies. — Stothard's method. — Inequality of excellence in the antique. — Earlier and later works. — Fault in the attitude of the "Fighting Gladiator."—Drawing from Nature.—Flaxman and Stothard's Practice. — The knowledge of anatomy may be abused.—Mr. Haydon's theory. — His autobiography.—His error respecting Raphael.—Fashions among students.—Stothard's drawings from the life.

PAGE

SECTION IX.

ON INVENTION AND EXPRESSION. — INSTANCES FROM THE OLD MASTERS. 93

The Powers of invention and expression only to be sustained by observation. — Hogarth's habits.—Stothard's sketch-books.—Raphael.—M. Angelo.—Anecdote of Burns. —The *Supernatural* not the *Unnatural*.—A Failure of N. Poussin in the Supernatural.—False notions of the Natural. —Travelling not necessary to a knowledge of human nature.—Creations of the Poet or the Painter, what they really are.—Selection and combination the principles on which invention works.—Invention and expression the first things displayed in Art.—The dark ages.—Giotto.— Raphael. — His Cartoons. — Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper."—Principle of the early painters, resembled that of the Naturalisti.—Imitations by Raphael and M. Angelo of some of the conceptions in the Campo Santo.—Orcagna's "Triumph of Death."—Early Art checked by the dread of idolatry.—The typical system adopted by M. Angelo in the Sistine Chapel.—Raphael's Cartoons.—Heads of the Saviour by da Vinci and by Raphael.—Question as to the propriety of representing the Divine nature of Christ.— The Religious sentiment not less displayed in Raphael's late works than in his earliest.—His Representations of childhood.—The Cartoons, the work of Raphael's own hands.—His "Sacrifice of the Innocents."—His frescoes in the Vatican.—The obligations of Raphael to M. Angelo have been over-stated.—M. Angelo, how greater than Raphael. —The "Raising of Lazarus," by S. de Piombo.—M. Angelo's "Holofernes." — The "Cartoon of Pisa." — Titian. — His Power in expression. — Allegory. — Paul Veronese. — Rubens.

SECTION X.

ON INVENTION AND EXPRESSION. — INSTANCES FROM THE BRITISH SCHOOL. 120

Hogarth.—His adherence to Nature closer than that of most dramatic writers. — His wit and humour.—Not a

PAGE

caricaturist. — His benevolence. — His Art Ideal. — His treatment of accessories. — His representations of childhood.—Vindicated from the charge of prostituting his Art at the suggestion of a vicious patron.—His failure in Subjects from the Bible.—Walpole's Insensibility to his excellence as a painter.—Exhibition of his Works in 1814.—Fuseli. — His "Sin and Death."—The "Satan" of Sir Thomas Lawrence. — Fuseli's chiaroscuro and colour. —Variety of excellence of the British school.—Stothard. — Bewick. — Opie. — Wilkie. — Haydon's mis-statements respecting the Royal Academy.

SECTION XI.

ON COMPOSITION. 155

The natural Principles of composition.—The picturesque styles.—Perspective.—Giotto.—The Campo Santo.—Gozzoli.—Masaccio's treatment of background.—The architecture in Raphael's Cartoons.—The "Sacraments" of Poussin.—Comparison between Orcagna's "Last Judgment," and Raphael's "Dispute of the Sacrament."—Symmetry of composition. — Irregularity.—Perspective, some of its principles explained.—Hogarth's faults in perspective.—Titian's "Peter Martyr."—His "Death of Abel," and other like compositions.—The serpentine line.—Hogarth's Mistake respecting "The Laocoon." — His "Analysis of Beauty."—The Richness of Hogarth's compositions.—Their perspicuity.—Drapery.—Fashions in dress.—Reynolds.—Gainsborough.—Hogarth's use of the dresses of his time.

SECTION XII.

ON COLOUR AND CHIAROSCURO. 171

Wilkie's Opinion of the importance of colour.—Depreciation of its value by Reynolds.—Rubens's "Descent from the Cross."—Colour compared by Reynolds to language. —P. Veronese.—Erroneous estimate of the Flemish and Dutch schools.—Colour not more a sensual element of

PAGE

Art than form.—P. Veronese not more gay in colour than Raphael.—His imitation of Raphael.—Their aim in colour the same.—Solemnity of the tones of Titian, Tintoret, and sometimes of P. Veronese.—Venetian and Dutch colour applicable to the most sublime subjects.—The admission of this by Reynolds.—A taste for colour always an early development.—Vulgarity in colour of European manufactures compared with those of China and Persia.—Colour of the early Italians, and the Flemish Painters.—The Van Eycks.—Failure of modern Painters in imitating the early schools.—Organization.—Entire schools have coloured well, and entire schools have coloured badly.—Cause of this.—Raphael inferior in colour to the best colourists.—Probable cause.—The best colourists generally those who have studied Nature only.—Students should begin to paint early.—Raphael inferior in colour only when compared with such Painters as Titian.—N. Poussin.—M. Angelo.—Opie's opinion of the best mode of Study.—Recommendation of Reynolds.—The Excellence of his drawing.—Colour more difficult of acquirement than form.—Chiaroscuro a late addition to the Art.—Its inseparable connection with colour.—Reflections.—Shadows on water.—Harmony.—Daylight.—Queen Elizabeth misunderstood.—West's theory.—On the treatment of blue.—P. Veronese.—Hogarth on the effects of time.—Tone of Ludovico Caracci.—The pathetic.—Subjects of wretchedness.—Etty.—His Art and personal character.—Rubens.—N. Poussin.—On copying.—Vehicles.—Fresco.—Picture cleaning.

SECTION XIII.

ON THE COLOUR OF RAPHAEL'S CARTOONS, AND THEIR PRESERVATION. 220

The drapery of the Saviour, in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," faded.—Probable difference between Raphael's choice of colour and that of Paul Veronese.—Late works of Raphael, in the Louvre.—History of the Cartoons.—The risk they run of destruction by fire.—Suggestions for their security.—Other pictures at Hampton Court.

PAGE

SECTION XIV.

ON THE FLEMISH AND DUTCH PAINTERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. 230

Quotation from Barry. — Rubens. — Rembrandt. — His Pupils.—G. Dow.—N. Maas.—Jan Steen.—Ostade Teniers. —Terburg.—Metsu.—De Hooge.—Cuyp.—Ruysdael.

SECTION XV.

ON LANDSCAPE. 253

The religious and moral influence of Landscape.—Mistaken classification.—Gainsborough.—The sky.—Wilson. —Cozens. — Girtin. — Turner. — Constable.—Warmth in Landscape may be expressed without what are called warm colours.—Tropical Landscape.

SECTION XVI.

ON PORTRAIT. 280

Exhibition of the Pictures of Reynolds at the British Gallery.—The greatest Historical Painters always great in Portrait. — Vandyke. — Velasquez. — Rubens. — Titian.— Physiognomy.—Holbein.—West's family picture. — Rembrandt. — Lely. — Kneller. — Reynolds.—Gainsborough.— Lawrence.—Jackson.—Photography.

CONCLUSION. 309

Parting advice to young Painters with respect to their habits, modes of study, &c.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Figure from the Sistine Chapel		*Frontispiece.*
The Annunciation	To face page	28
La Disputa del Sacramento	„	49
Resuscitation of the King's Son	„	62
Heliodorus	„	107
Poetry, or the Parnassus	„	111
The School of Athens	„	111
Cartoon of Pisa	„	116
The Misfortunes of Job	„	157
Noah and his Family	„	157
Composition by Orcagna, and the Imitation of it by Raphael	„	159
St. Peter Martyr	„	162
Descent from the Cross	„	172
St. Michael	„	224
Battle of the Amazons	„	234
Rembrandt (photograph)	„	238
Human Life	„	244
Itinerant Fiddler	„	246
The Satin Gown	„	249
Cozens, View in Italy	„	263
Girtin, Lake Scene	„	266
Group from the Sistine Chapel	„	282
The Surrender of Breda	„	283
The Anatomist Tulp	„	293

HANDBOOK

FOR

YOUNG PAINTERS.

SECTION I.

ON THE IMITATION OF NATURE, AND ON STYLE.

In comparing Art with Nature, we are as apt to underrate it, as in considering it by itself we are sometimes disposed to elevate it unduly; and both errors stand in the way of our improvement.

Though, in a comprehensive sense, it be true that "all Nature is but Art," and "all Chance direction;" and though it be of great importance that we should keep these truths always in mind, yet that Painting cannot rival the beauties of Nature is not a defect, for it can only be defective where it fails to do what is possible; and how far the painter may do something else, and something valuable, and something which Nature herself refuses to do, though she teaches it, I shall endeavour to show.

The axiom that the most perfect Art is that in which the Art is most concealed, is directed, I apprehend, against an ostentatious display of the means by which

the end is accomplished, and does not imply that we are to be cheated into a belief of the artist having effected his purpose by a happy chance, or by such extraordinary gifts as have rendered study and pains unnecessary. On the contrary, we always appreciate and therefore enjoy a picture the more in proportion as we discover ourselves, or are shown by others, the why and the wherefore of its excellences, and much of the pleasure it gives us depends on the intellectual employment it affords. Nor does the concealment of Art mean concealment of imitation, or that what it gives is to pass on us for a reality, for then we should immediately want what we never miss in a fine picture, motion and sound. Both of these it is a great triumph of the painter to suggest. Rubens was pre-eminently successful in giving action to his figures, and Hogarth's "Enraged Musician," as Fielding says, "is deafening to look at." But could the eye be deceived, from that moment the figures of Rubens would stand still, and the din of Hogarth's groups would cease; and, indeed, such Art would be unnatural, because, unless in the representation of still life, it would have the motionless and speechless appearance of wax-work—the most life-like, in externals, of all the modes of imitating Nature, and for that very reason the most lifeless.

These remarks are so obvious that they may seem superfluous. I may be told that deception is not attempted, and is, indeed, generally impossible, from the circumstances of pictures being bounded by their frames, and the diminutive scale on which natural objects are most often represented. Still, as this lowest kind

of truth is sometimes the aim of the painter, though it has never been the aim of a true artist, and as I have often heard it highly applauded when to a certain degree successful, and even by painters, it seems to me of importance that we should clearly understand that the illusion of Art is quite another thing from deception of the eye, and that such deception would in fact destroy illusion.

Children and childish minds are attracted by wonders. I remember when I was a boy seeing a picture that was placed flat against the wall at the end of a long room, representing an open door through which a flight of stairs receded, with the figure of a man of the size of life painted as if walking up them. At the base of the canvass a real step projected on the floor of the room, and at a certain distance it was impossible to distinguish between the painted stairs and the wooden one; indeed, so complete was the deception, that on first seeing it my only wonder was at the man's remaining stationary. This picture seemed to me perfection, and at that time I should probably have looked on the finest Titian with comparative indifference. It was, however, the work of a very ordinary painter, and I have since learned that deception to the degree in which it was here, with the assistance of a little ingenious management, attained, depends merely on carefully copying some of the most obvious appearances of Nature; and that her most charming qualities—all that the greatest artists have courted in her throughout their lives with success infinitely short of their hopes—may be omitted without rendering the representation less delusive.

I would ask whether others have not felt what has always occurred to me in looking at a Panorama,—that exactly in the degree in which the eye is deceived the stillness of the figures and the silence of the place produces a strange and somewhat unpleasant effect, and the more so if the subject places us in a city. We then want the hum of population, and the din of carriages, and the few voices heard in the room have an unnatural sound, as not harmonizing with the scene. Even in the Diorama, where the light and shade is varied by movement and the water is made to ripple, there are still many wants to be supplied, and these are indeed suggested the more in proportion to the attainment of deception. I have no wish to disparage the ingenuity of such contrivances; the Panorama is an admirable mode of conveying much information which by no other means can so well be given. My object is merely to ascertain how it is that there is always something unsatisfactory—to speak from my own feelings, I should say *unpleasant*—in all Art of every kind of which deception is an object. We do not like to be cheated even in a harmless way: the wonder excited by the tricks of a juggler is not without a mixture of humiliation; the powers of our minds, instead of being exercised, are for the time suspended, and even our senses cease to serve us; while the Art of a great actor delights us, not only as an imitation of Nature, but because our imaginations are excited, our understandings appealed to, and we have a secret gratification in the consciousness of the feelings he arouses within us; and these are also among the many

sources of pleasure we derive from the works of a great painter. "I feel," said Reynolds, speaking of Michael Angelo, "a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite." But neither at the theatre nor before a picture should we feel in this way were we for a moment to mistake what we see for reality.

"Imitation," says Coleridge, "is the mesothesis of likeness and difference. The difference is as essential to it as the likeness; for without the difference it would be copy or fac-simile. But to borrow a term from astronomy, it is a librating mesothesis; for it may verge more to likeness, as in painting, or more to difference, as in sculpture."

It is of the utmost importance, however, that we should come to a clear understanding of this difference between Painting and Nature, as from mistakes on this point have proceeded all the varieties of mannerism that have in every age sprung up like weeds in the fair domain of Art, and not seldom with their rank luxuriance over-run its whole extent. Every fault arising from indolence, from inability, or from conceit, may be sheltered, as it has been sheltered, under the principle that the object of Painting is not to deceive. Defective colouring, mannered forms, impudent and tasteless bravura of execution, as well as servile imitation of that which is very easy to copy, the immaturity of early Art.

Perhaps the best safeguard against mistake on this subject will be found in our perception that the Art of Painting *is in no respect*, excepting in what relates to

its mechanical instruments, a human invention, but the result solely of the discovery and application of those laws by which Nature addresses herself to the mind and heart through the eye; and that there is nothing really excellent in Art, that is not strictly the consequence of the artist's obedience to the laws of Nature.

Now deception, excepting with extraneous assistance, or but for a moment, is impossible. One instant's close examination of a wax figure which we have just before believed to be alive, shows us to what an infinite distance it is removed from Nature. And yet such is the effect of its approach to life, that even after we know what it is, we feel as much as ever its want of the power to move, and which we never miss in a fine statue. In all I have said, therefore, of deception of the eye, I have only meant deception for a moment or at a distance; for Nature allows of no substitutes that will bear continued or close inspection. And yet while she has placed this beyond the reach of human hands, she has entrusted Art with a peculiar mission—the power, as I have said, of doing something for the world which she herself refuses to do. How many of her most exquisite forms, graces, and movements—how many of her most beautiful combinations of colours, of lights, and shadows that are—"instant seen and instant gone"—does she not permit the painter to transfix for the delight of ages! And, indeed, he is entrusted with another, and a higher task, that of leading us to a perception of many of her latent beauties, and of many of her appearances which the unassisted

eye might not recognise as beauties, but for the direction of the pencil. These considerations alone are enough to show that Art has a place assigned to it in the great scheme of beneficence by which man is allowed to be the instrument of adding not only to his sources of innocent enjoyment, but of instruction. "Painting and sculpture," says Richardson, "are not necessary to our being; brutes and savage men subsist without them; but to our happiness as rational creatures they are absolutely so."

From what I have said, it is evident I must be at issue with Lessing, when he tells us that "all appearances of Nature which, in their actual state, are but of an instant's duration—all such appearances, be they agreeable or otherwise, acquire through the prolonged existence conferred on them by Art, a character so contrary to Nature, that at every successive view we take of them their expression becomes weaker, till at length we turn from the contemplation in weariness and disgust. La Mettrie, who had his portrait painted and engraved in the character of Democritus, laughs only on the first view. Look at him again, and the philosopher is converted into a buffoon, and his laugh into a grimace. Thus it is likewise with the expression of pain. The agony which is so great as to extort a shriek, either soon abates in violence or it must destroy the unhappy sufferer. Where torture so far overcomes the enduring fortitude of a man's nature as to make him scream, it is never for any continued space of time; and thus, the apparent perpetuity expressed in the representation

of Art would only serve to give to his screams the effect of womanish weakness or childish impatience."

Lessing argues in this way to show why the sculptor of the Laocoon has not chosen to make the victim bellow with pain, as in the description of his sufferings by Virgil. The attitudes of the entire group, however, being but of "an instant's duration," are, on the principle urged by the critic against a stronger expression, as inadmissible as if the sculptor had made the victim appear to shriek with anguish. Then as to the unpleasant effect of a laughing portrait, we all feel how disagreeable an unmeaning laugh is in nature; and in a portrait, unconnected with story or incident, it becomes unmeaning or worse, if, as probably in the instance alluded to by Lessing, the face looks at us. He was, in fact, blinded by his theory, to the privilege which Art, when it does not pretend to be Nature, possesses of perpetuating motion and expression;—a power as undeniable as it is inexplicable. At the bidding of Michael Angelo, life bursts from the grave, and its tenants rise, fall, or struggle with the fiends who drag them down; and on the canvasses of Wilson or Gaspar Poussin clouds open; lightnings flash, and the limbs of trees are shivered,—and we recur again and again to the contemplation of images of terror and grandeur that have impressed, as they do us, past generations, and shall still impress those to come; and so far from "their expression becoming," as Lessing says, "weaker at every successive view," it grows in reality stronger and stronger; for it is among the most remarkable qualities of every work of true genius, that it gains

on us with time, while that which is merely specious strikes most at first, and never again with the same effect.

But the mission of Art includes other things which Nature refuses to do, besides prolonging motion and expression, and suggesting sound.

Wilkie took great pleasure in arranging *tableaux vivants* for the amusement of his friends. I remember seeing, at his house, such representations of Vandyke's Cardinal Bentivoglio, his whole-length of Charles the First in his robes, and other well-known pictures. As may be supposed, they were remarkably well imitated, the company were delighted, and one gentleman went so far as to say "I shall never enjoy pictures again."

I confess my impression was exactly the reverse. I felt that I should enjoy the originals of these *tableaux* far more for having seen these living imitations of them; and I think every painter must so feel who has amused himself or been amused in this way. The draperies stubbornly refuse to fall in lines as fine, or in masses of light and shade, and colour, as broad as in the picture imitated; the unimportant throughout the composition obtrudes, and the important often conceals itself; and though, here and there, exquisite beauties of effect may appear which no art can rival, yet even these are apt to be out of place in the general arrangement, and the whole imitation has always far less of, that great essential, breadth, than we find in the particular picture imitated. It is not that Nature cannot do and has not done everything that is impressive

in Art, and infinitely more than Art has ever attempted; for she and she alone is the maker of Art, but having done this, she refuses to make pictures; because she will not interfere with the craft of the painter any more than she will allow him to substitute the results of his craft for her matchless works.

And now we come to a great and unceasing difficulty; the difficulty of choosing from among the qualities of Nature that are most within reach of the pencil, those we should strive to the utmost to attain, and those which may be left out with advantage, or but slightly indicated. All the most agreeable traits of Nature, as well as all the least, are so variously modified by circumstances and by associations, that to attempt to give anything like general rules for selection and rejection—that difficult task in which the painter is engaged from the beginning to the end of his work, and on which all that the mind has to do with Art depends—to attempt to give general rules for this would only lead to mannerism. Hogarth, in his "Battle of the Pictures," has with infinite humour opposed his Bacchanalian scene in the "Rake's Progress" to a "Feast of the Gods;" but, when we look at these seriously, we see two subjects brought together in which, whatever they may have in common, the treatment proper to each would be wholly improper if exchanged.

Coleridge has well guarded the passage I have quoted from him, by calling the difference from Nature, which is essential to imitation, "a librating difference." It will vary, in the hands of a painter of taste, with the subject; and his imitation will even be less literal

in some parts of the same picture than in others, without destroying the unity of the whole.

Reynolds, in his "Death of Dido," indicates the wound in her side by a slight touch of red, while a mere matter-of-fact painter would draw our attention to it by a degree of exact imitation that would be sickening.

It is such a plodding and indiscriminate habit of copying Nature that places Gerard Dow, to me, much below the best painters of the Dutch school. Where he would render with scrupulous precision every wrinkle in the face of an old woman, greater artists, as his master, Rembrandt, for instance, would express the character of flesh, and make the head a means of displaying a fine effect of chiaroscuro; and where Dow would count the threads of a carpet, Terburgh, Metzu, or Jan Steen would express the beauty of its surface or the richness of its colour.

It is not to his high finish that I object, but to the *tastelessness* of his finish. Where the imitation of minutiæ is to stop it is not easy to determine, but it is clear that the finish that be-littles, or that suggests at the first glance the labour and time employed in it, must be wrong.

His Art is, therefore, exactly that which may be accomplished by a clever, a patient, and laborious man, without imagination, and with but ordinary taste. Perhaps he stands at the head of a class of such painters, and a very large class it is; while the Art of Terburgh, of Metzu, of Jan Steen, and, I need not say, of Rembrandt, like all sterling Art, is ideal. Nature not altered, but "to advantage dressed."

But here I feel the difficulty of offering advice to students of different degrees of advancement—the impossibility, indeed, of accommodating anything I can say to the individual wants of all. In the practice of drawing or painting from Nature, there can be no doubt that, until correctness of eye and obedience of hand are attained, the closest possible, the most minute imitation, is the best. The aim at deception can do no harm until these powers are matured; for, as Fuseli remarks,—"deception is the parent of imitation;" and till the taste is well advanced it is, in a high degree, dangerous to attempt to generalize. We should be able to put everything we see in Nature into a picture before we venture to leave anything out. I have known young painters commence with generalization, affecting a contempt for the attention to minutiæ of some of their contemporaries, the secret of which lay in their own indolence. But the result of this was always that a vague and uninformed style, in the end, consigned their productions to oblivion. No painter ever generalized with more taste and meaning than Velasquez, but his early works are remarkable for precision of imitation, of which "The Water Carrier," belonging to the Duke of Wellington, is an admirable specimen. Indeed it may safely be assumed that no painter is likely to become great who does not begin with scrupulous finish. There may have been instances of the reverse, but in every such case there has been something to unlearn.

Style is a comprehensive term applying to everything in painting,—to composition, to form, to colour, to

chiaroscuro, and to execution. Of the last, indeed, there are almost as many styles as painters, and of all as many styles as schools. But there is nothing analogous to these diversities of Art in Nature. Photographic pictures might be made from every variety of scenery in the world, and yet what we may call their style would be but one. Style, however, rightly understood, is so far from objectionable in Painting, that it forms one among its valuable prerogatives. The observation of Reynolds, that "peculiar marks are generally, if not always, defects," is directed against manner not style, but as these are often confounded, it is well that we should understand the difference. Style in form, in character, in expression, in colour, and in light and shadow, is the result of the choice of the best of these with reference to the subject. It is, therefore, synonymous with the ideal, and abstractedly considered is natural, but almost always above individual Nature. Manner is a departure from Nature, sometimes resulting from a dissatisfaction with her ordinary forms without the ability of correcting them by comparison and selection, but more often from the indolence that adopts compendious modes of arrangement, expression, execution, &c. The styles of the greatest painters are, perhaps, in no instance perfectly free from some alloy of manner, while the manner of a great painter, as Fuseli has remarked, often becomes the style of lesser ones.

It by no means follows, however, that because styles are different,—I take the word now in its highest signification,—that some are right and others wrong.

Apart from manner, the style of every genuine painter is right; the difference consisting in his giving some quality or qualities of Nature in more perfection than they have been given by any other; and if it be asked whether Nature can supply every individual with something which, in the same degree, is denied to the rest? I would answer, that if the principles on which Nature works are simpler than we are apt to imagine, the combinations of effects resulting from these principles are endless.

Style and subject are often confounded with each other by writers, and in ordinary conversation nothing is more common than this mistake: as an instance, I remember that Paul Delaroche's picture of "Charles the First insulted by the Soldiers" was said to be in the *style* of Terburg, because the dresses were such as he painted.

In regarding early Italian Art, to which attention has of late years been so much attracted, it is of great consequence that we consider its distance from Nature not as a departure from her, but as the nearest approach the painters could make to her,—a distance they laboured to shorten with a remarkable steadiness of advance to the consummation of Art in the hands of Michael Angelo and Raphael. The general character of mediæval imitation is the same as that of Chinese Art, and is evidently a style, if such it may be called, which must chiefly mark immaturity everywhere and under all circumstances. In the infant Art of every country the accidental appearances of Nature are omitted, not so much, perhaps, from their being unperceived as from

a notion that they would interfere, and when imperfectly given they do interfere, with beauty and expression, both of which have always been the first objects of all serious Art. The Chinese, for instance, though much of their ornamental painting belongs to the grotesque, yet in their representations of real life aim to the utmost at beauty, grace, and expression. To those enthusiastic admirers of mediæval Art who may think there is something sacrilegious in comparing anything by Chinese hands with it, I might mention that Flaxman, than whom no man ever more fully appreciated early Italian Art, and who, indeed, was the first among the moderns to direct attention to it, saw how much, apart from subject, Chinese painting had in common with it; for I remember seeing Chinese pictures hanging on the walls of his parlour, which he admired for their grace and simplicity as well as for the beauty of their colour. It may not, indeed, be impossible that the Chinese exercised some influence on European Art at its revival. Lord Lindsay notices a resemblance to Chinese Art in some of the Roman frescoes executed at the beginning of the eleventh century; and if Chinese silks were imported by the Roman emperors, why might not some of the pictures of that singular people (a people whose artists have always been colourists) find their way to Rome, when painting was nearly extinct in Europe? The resemblance between Chinese and Venetian colour is very striking; much more so than any resemblance between Indian, or Persian, and Venetian Art.

The severity of critics on the sameness of the works of one hand is not always just. Where it is sameness of an excellence we should be grateful for it. The gentleness, so utterly removed from insipidity, of Raphael, the sublimity of Michael Angelo, the almost invariably golden tones of Titian, or the pervading silver of Paul Veronese, are things of which true taste never tires. To demand that every work of one master should be distinct in all its characteristics is to ask for something which the conditions of human nature refuse to grant. We have sufficient variety in the various men; and the endeavour of a painter to go out of himself and into another, to give up what may be called his *birthright*, is always to be lamented if he have genius. A friend of Stothard, on being told that he had painted a picture very like Rubens, said, with much good sense, "I would rather see a picture by him very like Stothard." Gainsborough occasionally stands on the same level in portraiture with Reynolds, because he kept himself distinct; but had he attempted the same style, he must at once have fallen below his illustrious rival, there to remain.

SECTION II.

ON THE IMITATION OF ART.

A YOUNG painter at the commencement of his studies, how far soever he may be from a perception of the highest beauties of pictures, will often see truly some of their greatest faults. As he becomes better acquainted with fine works, the beauties he discovers in them atone for the faults which he still sees; but if on becoming more alive to their excellences, he allows himself to be persuaded that the faults are *necessarily* connected with the beauties,—or that they are conventional merits, and not only inseparable from, but indispensable to particular styles,—he makes an opening in his mind for the admission of all the unfounded theories which ingenious critics have broached on the false system of considering pictures as *the Art*, rather than as manifestations of parts of the Art, which is the most that can be said even of the greatest works known to the world.

Were the study of pictures alone sufficient to make great painters of us, we are bound to surpass all our predecessors. But with apparently greater advantages, in this respect, than the world ever before presented, the young painter has more real difficulties to contend with, in the commencement of his studies now, than at any former time. The very wealth of Art creates one source of

embarrassment. The student is apt to be so impressed with awe by the works of the great masters now congregated in galleries, that any attempt to rival or combine their excellences seems utterly hopeless. He wanders through the public collections, admiring rather than studying the productions of an order of beings that he cannot believe are ever again to exist. He settles it in his mind that an approach to such excellence will be happiness enough for him. His aim, therefore, is low from the first; and, as is always the case, he falls short of his aim, and dooms himself to mediocrity for life. This is the defect of one class of minds.

Another class find it easy to imitate in a superficial way, but in a way sufficiently plausible to catch the admiration of superficial critics, the dash of Art. They omit details, because great painters have done so; but they do not see that the very omissions of the great masters are full of slight and exquisite indications of knowledge which they have not acquired. They endeavour to grasp the end without being acquainted with the means; and though they may impose on themselves and the world for a time, the emptiness of their pretensions is sure to be discovered at last. It is in reference to the productions of such minds that Richardson says, "there is bold painting, and there is also impudent painting."

Another error, and as I conceive a very pernicious and prevailing one, is sectarianism in Art; the bigoted admiration of any one school or any one master, however deserving of admiration, to the exclusion of all

the rest. There cannot be a greater mistake; and I have invariably remarked, that he who pins his faith wholly on any one style is exactly he who least perceives that in it which is its peculiar charm. All great masters throw light on each other; and I am convinced that no mind will thoroughly relish Raphael and Michael Angelo, which does not thoroughly relish Rubens and Rembrandt. Nay, I will say, that the simplicity and the purity of feeling of Giotto, Angelico, and others of the early Italian masters, will be best appreciated by the mind that is most sensibly alive to every variety of excellence in the Art. The bigoted sectarian generally admires in the wrong place,—clings to what is merely accidental, to that which belongs to the time and country in which the painter has lived; and ever fails to perceive that which is essential in the style, that which is catholic, and which therefore connects all the first-rate minds of all ages with each other. It is this essence which is really the Art, all else is but its dress.

Another obstacle to the advantage to be derived from the works of the old masters, is the belief that everything has been done that can be done. We are prone to consider the Art as an inclosure in which we can only travel in a circle, rather than as a vantage ground from which fresh discoveries in Nature may be made. It is easy to add capricious and eccentric novelties of style to what exists; but to present some genuine quality of Nature for the first time, or some new combination of what is already known to Art, is the great difficulty; and yet I believe it might be

oftener and more easily accomplished than it is, if we would allow Art to lead us to Nature rather than erect it into a barrier against all in Nature that is not already admitted within its confines. He who believes that Nature is not exhausted will, I am convinced, if he truly loves her, find that she is not. It is this faith in her abundance that has caused every revival of Art from its slumbers. Such a faith inspired Rubens and Rembrandt to restore the glories of the Flemish and Dutch schools, not by attempting their exact revival, but by opening new views and creating each a style of his own, which, in spite of many and great faults, has placed them for ever among the most illustrious benefactors of painting. A like faith emboldened Hogarth, notwithstanding the most discouraging circumstances that ever genius was surrounded by, to create a species of Art unknown to the world before him, and to carry it at once to a condition precluding all imitation; and it was the same faith in the boundless stores of Nature that enabled Reynolds to give a fresh charm to portrait, after all that had been done for it by Holbein, Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Vandyke, Velasquez, and Rembrandt.

It is easy to delude ourselves into the belief that we love Art or that we love Nature, but the genuine love and appreciation of both will certainly produce such effects as I have noticed; for the great painters, that have been mentioned, have all achieved their separate triumphs by that unerring instinct of genius which looks to Art only as the interpreter of Nature, and not as a thing in itself perfect and complete.

The minds of students are much more impressed, in the commencement of their studies, by the productions of their contemporaries than by the works of the old masters,* and these early impressions are not always wholly eradicated through the longest life. There may be seeming exceptions to this, but I believe there are very few real ones. That contemporary Art is the first to impress us may be advantageous, or otherwise, according to circumstances. Its advantages need not be dwelt upon, as such influence stands in no need of recommendation; but it may be useful to point out some of the dangers of what is an unavoidable because an unconscious habit of our students, the habit of resorting to our annual exhibitions as to so many schools.

In an assemblage of the accidental productions of a year, and with which it is necessary to cover every inch of wall, there must of necessity be a great preponderance of the indifferent, and very much of what is positively bad; and inexperienced eyes cannot dwell often and long on this without injury. The student is apt to thank his stars that he can do better than much that he sees, and contents himself with respectable mediocrity; and the more so as it is found that mediocrity, managed with ordinary tact, may secure patronage and even fortune, while unworldly genius is often neglected. There are no topics more frequently dwelt on by writers and talkers than the faults of the age—and yet nothing so difficult to understand. But to the young artist it

* I can remember thinking Lawrence a better painter than Reynolds, and West equal to Raphael.

is of the last importance that he should see clearly what are the besetting sins of the school to which he belongs. These, it is very true, are to be seen in their fullest luxuriance in our exhibitions; but there is danger if the student resort frequently to them for instruction, that he may become hopelessly blind to the mannerism of the day; and indeed this error in self-education is the chief cause of the decline of Art in every school.

A young artist will find, as he advances, that a thorough appreciation of the qualities that make painting poetic is chiefly confined to painters, or to others whose occupations have left them much leisure to indulge a natural admiration of the Art. A great poet *may* feel the beauties of Painting, but he does not necessarily feel them because he is a great poet, and it is possible that even Shakespear may scarcely have known a good picture from a bad one, though there can be no doubt that his perception of a poetic incident or thought, in a picture, would have been quicker than that of most men. Coleridge has noticed that Milton, though he must have seen in his youth the greatest works of Art in Italy, makes no allusion to them in any of his writings.

Neither Byron nor Scott, with all their relish for the beauties of Nature, had any knowledge or love of Painting, *as Art;* and I believe, among the poets of the age, Mr. Rogers, in possessing such a taste, is the one exception. The want of a true taste in Art is not a fault; but it is a grievous fault when those who are without it, or who have a mere amateur smat-

tering knowledge of Painting (a far worse thing than no knowledge), erect themselves, on account of their rank, or fortune, or position in society, into directors of the public in matters of Art. Such wealthy and titled meddlers have often, though with the best intentions on their part, been the worst enemies of the Arts of this country.

If a great poet be not necessarily a judge of pictures, still less is a great statesman or a great prince likely to find time to become one. We are fond of recurring to the golden age of Leo X., during which, however, Michael Angelo, then in the prime of life, and when his powers as an artist were greater than they had been or ever were again, was shamefully misemployed. His great works in the Sistine Chapel were stopped, and he was banished to the mountains of Pietra Santa, during almost the entire pontificate of Leo, there to do the work of an engineer! That the greatest works of Art, since its revival, graced the ages of Julius II. and Leo X., is, I am inclined to think, traceable to a rare and fortunate concurrence of circumstances, rather than to any remarkable taste in those Popes, other than a general love of the magnificent.

But I would fain hope, though the highest excellences in all the fine Arts are addressed only to the few, yet that few is not so small a number as may be supposed; for I believe thousands of modest minds pass silently through the world, unheard of, whose lives are sweetened by their gentle influences, and whose real enjoyments in matters of taste are far

greater than the enjoyments of many who are publicly known as patrons.

But to return to our subject.—"The eye," as Sir Charles Eastlake says, "has its own poetry;" and it is of great importance that we keep in mind the distinction between a poetic thought or incident and the poetry that is inherent in Painting, and without which Painting is not a fine art.

In the "Cephalus and Aurora," of Nicolo Poussin in our National Gallery, the substitution of Apollo for the rising sun, as he has managed it, is in the highest degree poetic. But the thought alone is a mere imitation of the poets, which might have occurred to the most prosaic mind. It is entirely, therefore to the technical treatment—to the colour, and to the manner in which the forms of the chariot and horses of the god melt into the shapes of clouds, in fact, to the chiaroscuro, that the incident, as connected with the picture, owes its poetry; and the same technical qualities in the hands of Rembrandt, in one of his finest landscapes, make the sails of a windmill, from which the last glow of evening is reflected, eminently poetic.

Mr. Ruskin has noticed incidents in the pictures of Tintoret that show how fine an imagination he possessed; but had not his light and shadow and his colour been of a high order, the works containing these incidents would have passed into oblivion.

I have never seen the "Polyphemus" of Nicolo Poussin. To judge from copies, its effect should be light and silvery; but the engraving, alone, shows it

to me as the most poetic of all the landscape compositions of this eminently poetic painter. It is made up of the most beautiful and romantic features of Nature, and richly peopled from classic poetry. The fountain in the foreground, flowing from the urn of a river god, and tended in its course by a beautiful group of nymphs, tells us of the death of Acis. One of the nymphs turns to the distant sea, in which Galatea has hid herself, and from which Polyphemus endeavours to draw her forth by his rude minstrelsy. So I understand the picture. But whether or not I translate it aright, its impression is equally poetic, and was so to me before I looked for the story. Its great feature, the form of the giant relieved upon the bright sky as he sits on his rocky throne, owes its grandeur to the strictly technical principles of perspective, linear and aerial; and if the painters of antiquity were, as some have supposed, unacquainted with the laws of this science, it is clear that Zeuxis himself could not have given the sublimity this subject has received at the hands of the French painter; and we are sure that neither Orcagna nor any Italian, before perspective or chiaroscuro (which includes aerial perspective) were understood, could have effected such an impression.

In endeavouring to enforce the importance of technical qualities, I do not undervalue the high conceptions of Art. But I wish to draw attention to the only means by which they can be fully displayed. These means are the things that are proper to painting alone,—

and which it is too much the fashion to depreciate, as merely technical, merely ornamental, or merely sensual.

I would say to the painter who undervalues these,—tell your story, describe your scene, express your sentiment, or display your learning in words, and you may arrive at the honours of a poet or a philosopher; but do not attempt to do so in a language with which you have made yourself but imperfectly acquainted, because you were insensible to its worth,—and expect to share the reward of those who are skilled in that language, though they may not possess your imagination or your knowledge of books.

Let us not be duped by words. Let us remember that what is technical in Painting has not yet been achieved with the perfection that may be imagined even by the greatest artists;—that what is ornamental is an imitation of the ornaments with which the Creator has decorated every work of his hands; and that what is sensual is only so, in an evil sense, by an abuse of his gifts.

There is no word in our language more often misapplied to Art than this word sensual—no modes of reasoning more erroneous than those of late so much in use, based on analogies, that have no real existence, between the pleasures of sense. A modern, accomplished, and eloquent writer,* following a notion of Blake, deprecates, for instance, the occasional softening of the outline, by comparing it to "that lax morality which confounds the limits of light and darkness, right

* Lord Lindsay.

and wrong." Not being a painter, he is not aware that he is here objecting to the truest imitation of Nature.

Again he says, "We find the purest and brightest colours only in Fra Angelico's pictures, with a general predominance of blue, which we have observed to prevail more or less in so many of the semi-Byzantine painters; and which, fanciful as it may appear, I cannot but attribute, independently of mere tradition, to an inherent, instinctive sympathy between their mental constitution and the colour in question, as that of red or of blood may be observed to prevail among painters in whom Sense or Nature predominates over Spirit." Now why, I would ask, is the reasoning in this passage to be confined to the colours of red and of blue?—why may it not discover that painters in whom avarice predominates are fond of yellow because it is the colour of gold,—and so on? But, in truth, the sensual Correggio seems less fond of red than almost any other painter. In all his works, with which I am acquainted, it is very sparingly introduced, while nothing can exceed the refinement with which delicate blues (and he was very fond of blue) are managed by him. Then, again, a distinction seems implied, in the passage I have quoted, between the Spiritual and the Natural, as if it were possible to express the spiritual by any other medium than the natural. A painter, it is true, may be very natural without being spiritual, but that which is spiritual in Art can only be fully developed in the degree in which the painter is natural.

Though I know little of the works of Fra Angelico, I

will not question the justice of the praises that have been given to him by his warmest admirers. I do not envy the man who can read the accounts handed down to us of the character and habits of this sainted painter and his heart not be warmed. Such a being, so purified from all earthly stain, and living a life so entirely above the world, endued also with genius and taste, must have been, as he was felt to be by his contemporaries, the fittest painter, of that time, of angels. But then he could only bring to the task the imperfect art he possessed, and it seems to me a fatal sign against all healthy progress in Painting, that it is necessary to say that such colour and such evanescence of treatment as Reynolds has given to that exquisite group of winged heads in our National Gallery, would have made even the angels of Angelico more angelic. I say nothing of the character of the cherubs of Reynolds. Call them merely beautiful children, if you will. We know they are but portraits, in different views, of one child; but were they as ordinary in character as the children of Murillo, I should still say that, in colour and general treatment, they are among the most angelic things known to the Art, and simply because they are the most natural in the highest sense of the word: and I am convinced that the sincere, the truly humble, and therefore the truly teachable Angelico, would have gladly adopted all that Reynolds possessed, beyond himself, could he have seen it;—yes, even though Reynolds has permitted the ringlets of his cherubs to float loosely on the breath of Heaven instead of arranging them in sculpturesque


ECCE VIRGO CONCIPIET ET PARIET FILIVM ET VOCABIT NOMIN EIVS EMANVEL VSA. VII. C
ECCE CONCIPIES IN VTERO ET PARIES FILIVM ET VOCABIS NOMEN EIVS IHESVM LVCE. I. C

THE ANNUNCIATION—by ANGELICO DA FIESOLE

regularity over their foreheads with all the formality of a hair-dresser; and which, as it accords with the style of the early Italians, is by some critics, and not a few painters, considered essential to the adornment of angelic faces.

A system of imitation that rejects what such men as Titian, Correggio, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Reynolds, have revealed to the world of the beauties of Nature, is based on a mistake as great as it would be in an astronomer to rest satisfied with the state in which Astronomy was left by Copernicus.*

* I am glad to find that opinions which I expressed to the students of the Royal Academy, five years ago, are in accordance with those of Dr. Waagen, from whose letter, addressed "to the Editor of the *Times*, July 13th, 1854," the following is a quotation:—

"Within a few years a school of painters has arisen in England whose aim it is to elevate the character of modern art, not only by the treatment of sacred subjects, but by the adoption of the more or less undeveloped forms of the 15th century. Considering the warm interest I feel for the true advance of art in this country, the kindness and deference with which my opinions are here received by artists and friends of art, and the experience which a German especially has gathered from the results of a similar movement, originating 40 years ago, in his own country, I feel it a kind of obligation to call the attention of the art-loving portion of the public to the real tendency of this school. I need hardly say that I sympathise entirely with the painters of this class, both German and English, in the exceeding attractiveness of that pure and earnest religious feeling which pervades the works of Fiesole and other masters of the 15th century. I also comprehend the liability in their minds to identify the expression of that feeling with the forms peculiar to those masters. At the same time, it is no less true that this identification, and the efforts, however well meant, to which it has led, are totally

The supposed usurping nature of colour, by which it is thought to draw attention too much from higher qualities, we shall always find has been inferred only from Art in which there is little story or expression;

mistaken, and can only frustrate that end for which these painters are so zealously labouring. Guided by this erroneous principle, they have sought to transfer to their pictures not only the beauties, but the defects of their great models; unmindful of the fact, which a general survey of the history of art does not fail to teach, that those early masters attract us not on account of their meagre drawing, hard outlines, erroneous perspective, conventional glories, &c., but, on the contrary, in spite of these defects and peculiarities. We overlook these simply and solely because, in the undeveloped state of the scientific and technical resources of painting at that period, they could not be avoided. But it is quite another thing when, under the false impression that the feeling they emulate can be better reared by ignorance than by knowledge, we see those defects and peculiarities transferred to the works of modern artists, who purposely close their eyes to those scientific and technical lights which have now become the common property of art, and retrograde to a state of darkness for which there is no excuse.

"It must be also borne in mind, that the whole style of feeling proper to those early masters, deeply rooted as it was in the religious enthusiasm of their times—of which it may be considered as the highest and most refined fruit—cannot possibly be voluntarily recalled in a period of such totally different tendencies as the present. It stands to reason, therefore, that the pictures even of the most gifted modern artists, produced by such a process, can at most be considered but as able reminiscences of the middle ages, but by no means as the healthy expositors of the religious feeling, now, thank God, greatly revived and proper to our age, or of the resources of art so plentifully within their reach; while those of the less gifted, able only to counterfeit the defects, but not to emulate the spirit of the olden time, present a scene of misplaced labour the most painful a true lover of art can well behold."

and of such Art it would be nearer the truth to say that the colour does not interfere with the story or expression, but reigns paramount only because the story and expression do not interfere with it. Does not the beauty of Hogarth's colour, instead of interfering, in the slightest degree, with his story or expression, greatly aid them? When we stand before his pictures in the National Gallery, is their colour, fine as it is, ever the first thing we think or speak of?—The truth is, that to a cultivated eye it is bad colour, that which is unnatural, whether from exaggeration or from falling short of the hues of Nature, that attracts attention from the subject and prevents our full enjoyment of whatever other excellences the work may have,—just as an instrument out of tune would preclude the ear from the enjoyment of a fine piece of music.

It would be desirable, were it possible, that we should form in our minds a standard of excellence distinct from every particular style that has yet existed; but of such a standard we can only attain an imperfect vision—by the comparison of the styles that have existed, and the discovery thence of the great principles common to all.

In referring to pictures, I wish, as much as possible, to speak of those which are immediately accessible to us; but our National Gallery has nothing that can be considered as a worthy specimen of Mediæval Art.*

* While these pages are passing through the press, I observe that four specimens of early Art have been purchased for the nation. A picture, ruined in its colour, of a Madonna and Child,

The two pictures attributed to Taddeo Gaddi are but antiquarian curiosities; and the little Perugino is not a work from which the master of Raphael is to be judged. Francia cannot be classed with the mediæval painters, as he was contemporary with Raphael. Still, he is a painter whom it is at present much the fashion, with the advocates for the imitation of early Art, to praise. His two pictures in our Gallery are perhaps not fair specimens of his style; for the mediocrity that pervades them, as well in character and sentiment as in every other quality, is redeemed only by the head of the Saviour, in the arched one, which is very fine, and the more striking by its contrast to the red-eyed angels on either side,—for both of which the painter's lay figure might have served as a model. Nevertheless, as I have heard the entire treatment of these pictures highly commended by critics who would almost exclude Raphael from among religious painters, I would ask any body acquainted with Art—any one except a bigoted devotee to the earlier masters—to turn from the silver purity of Correggio to the

attended by Angels, and appearing to a Saint, who has a desk, with a book and papers before him, *supposed* to be by Masaccio; an indifferent portrait *supposed* to be by Albert Durer, but destitute of any of the excellence of that great painter; a Holy Family, *supposed* to be by *a pupil* of Leonardo da Vinci; and a Head of the Saviour, of no value whatever, by an unknown painter.

At the same time the proprietors of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, have given us the means of forming some judgment of Mediæval Art, by a few powerfully-coloured copies from important works by Cimabue, Giotto, Fra Angelico, and others of the early Italians.

Francias, and tell me whether he does not feel how common, how toneless, and how hard their colour is compared to that of Correggio. I use the expression *hard*, for colour may be hard, and always is so when destitute of the gradations and subtle varieties of tint which are inseparable from it in nature.

I am fully aware how often injustice is the result of comparisons between dissimilar styles where each has excellences of its own; yet in comparing Correggio's little picture of the "Virgin and Child" with the largest of the Francias, I feel that, in as far as the colour and chiaroscuro of the former is more pure, more refined, and therefore more natural, it is far more in accord with holiness of sentiment than that of the latter,—and that, even with regard to expression, the "Madonna" of Correggio has at least that of maternal joy and tenderness,—while the insipid face that Francia has given, has not sufficient character to express an earnest sentiment of any kind.

There is a righteousness overmuch in taste, which, though it may begin in sincerity, cannot but end in sheer affectation; and against the mischief of which the appeal must be to our eyes and to common sense. No painter ever spread more of the purest light of Heaven over the objects he painted than Correggio. If what he shows us by that light is not Heavenly—if, as Fuseli says, "he could build Heaven, but he could not people it"—the light itself which he drew down is not degraded. The difficulty is, to separate in our minds qualities which we see united

in particular styles of Art, and which we are therefore apt to imagine cannot and must not be separated. It was a want of the power of doing this that made Blake exclaim, "Correggio is a soft and effeminate, and therefore a most cruel, demon,—whose whole delight is to cause endless labour to whoever suffers him to enter his mind."

The truth is, Blake had attempted the imitation of those natural qualities of Art so often denounced as ornamental and sensual. He had suffered, as he said, from "temptations and perturbations, destructive of imaginative power by means of that infernal machine called chiaroscuro, in the hands of Venetian and Flemish demons who hate the Roman and Florentine schools." These temptations led him to experiments in which he failed, and by a consequence, which he did not see, he failed in an adequate expression of his conceptions, many of which are beautiful, and all the emanations of one of the purest and most sincere of minds; while Stothard, a far greater, because, as a painter, a far wiser man than Blake, by availing himself of the assistance of everything excellent in previous Art, which his just mind could always separate from the objectionable in subject or expression, has left a rich legacy to his country of the true, the pure, the playful, the graceful, and the sacred,—enshrined in a style, not faultless certainly, but *his own*, and under the direction of a most refined taste.

And yet Blake's Art, imperfect as it is, is more satisfactory to me than most of the modern imitations of the

early Italians that I have yet seen; for it has an earnestness of expression which I confess I look for in vain in the Giottos of the present day.

It was greatly for the health and strength of early Art, as well in Italy, as in Germany that it did not begin with Imagination. And what is true of the progress of a school is true of the progress of an individual,—for the young painter who begins with Imagination (and this was the fatal mistake of Blake) begins at the wrong end of the Art. Hogarth painted portraits and family groups before he began to invent; and the angels of the early Christian painters were but a higher order of the attendants of the altar, while the attitudes and expressions, and generally the garments of their saints, were suggested by the realities that were every day before their eyes in churches and convents. But in proportion as the imaginative faculty developed itself, the painters ceased to introduce, into sacred subjects, priestly and monkish habits, and the practice was entirely laid aside by Michael Angelo, and by Raphael (in his later practice)—and in their hands Art became truly catholic.

Sir Charles Eastlake says that "among the merits or recommendations of the Cartoons may be reckoned their being interesting in all places and to all classes of Christians. But for this circumstance, perhaps, we should not now possess them; for when the treasures of Art collected by Charles the First were sold, and such pictures as were deemed 'superstitious' were ordered to be 'forthwith burnt,' the Cartoons would hardly have been repurchased by Cromwell, to whom

we are indebted for preserving them to the nation, if they could have been considered to come within the proscribed class."*

But the young painter is now told that he must "go back to first principles." And what, I would ask, are these first principles?—Many of the principles of Nature, most important to Art, are among the latest discoveries. But the student must "ascend to the fountain-head, he must study Duccio and Giotto that he may paint like Taddeo di Bertolo and Masaccio,—Taddeo di Bertolo and Masaccio that he may paint like Perugino and Lucca Signorelli,—and Perugino and Lucca Signorelli that he may paint like Raphael and Michael Angelo."† But, I ask, why should he aim to paint like any, even the last of these? Why attempt that which never has been, and never can be accomplished?—namely, the reproduction of the exact style of any age or master.

Northcote was told that a picture had been painted by a living artist that might be mistaken for a Claude. "Then I know," was his reply, "that it is good for nothing; if you should tell me that a picture were painted as fine as a Claude it would be quite another thing, for to be equal to Claude a painter must be as distinct from him as he was from all the painters before him. He must have looked at Nature for himself, as Claude did; availing himself of the assistance of previous Art only in the degree in which Claude did so."

* Note to Kugler's "Handbook of Painting for Italy."

† Lord Lindsay.

We can no more recall the precise Art of a past age than we can return to the manners, the customs, and the entire mode of thinking of that age. Man, in every period of the world, is essentially the same; but his tastes are so modified by the conditions of the society in which he lives, that all attempts at literal imitation of a bygone epoch become mere affectation; and as the spirit of Chaucer is not to be caught by adopting his phraseology or by printing in black letter, so neither shall we catch the spirit of any school or master by adopting that from it which is merely temporary.

The system on which the most original painters have imitated their predecessors has always been eclectic, and so it will always be; for without any settled plan of combining the beauties of other schools like that which has given the name of eclectics *especially* to the Carracci and their scholars, no painter of true taste can see an excellence anywhere, without the wish to engraft it on his own style.

So it was with Raphael, with Titian, with Rubens, and with every painter of comprehensive mind. Such men are as original as the naturalisti, who opposed the system of the Carracci, and much more universal; for they include the principle of the naturalisti, without their slavery to the pecularities of a living model taken without selection. It is remarkable that the Carracci did not disdain to learn from the naturalisti, while the latter remained satisfied with their own principle, which in such hands as those of Caravaggio was very effective, and where his subjects were from ordinary

Nature, the best of all principles; for it is clear it did not hinder him from adopting, from previous Art, whatever was congenial with his own mind; so that, in some degree, even this leader of the naturalisti was eclectic.

There are no such things as incompatible excellences or beauties; for as the excellences of a picture are always relative, so any object, or expression, or shape, or grace, or colour, however beautiful or perfect in itself, or any charm of execution, if it does not harmonize with the work, or if it interferes with the breadth or unity of the whole, ceases to be a beauty or an excellence. It is only, therefore, in the hands of inferior painters that eclecticism can be charged with incongruity.

But eclecticism has been supposed to foster mediocrity. And this it will do, if it confine the painter too much to the imitation of Art, though it be the Art of the greatest masters. But no truly great artist ever allowed even the finest pictures to stand between him and Nature, nor ever permitted any narrow sectarian preferences to blind him to a single excellence in any school or master.

How far the adoption of a thought, incident, or attitude from previous Art is liable to the charge of plagiarism has been determined by Fuseli. Wherever such a translation can be made with a certainty of improvement, it merits commendation,—wherever not, let it be given up to the severity of criticism. Masaccio is not robbed by Raphael, but honoured and made more known.

At the same time the habit of looking much into Art

for suggestions of incident, attitude, or composition, is full of the danger of encouraging indolence and repressing originality, I know that Flaxman, classical and eclectic as he was, derived the hint of many of his most elegant compositions and single figures from the streets and from the drawing-room, and still more from his own domestic circle;—and Stothard spoke of walking the streets for his subjects.

SECTION III.

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAWS AND RULES.

THERE is a common notion that genius elevates its possessor above the observance of rules; a notion that falls in with the many vague impressions against the value of teaching in matters of taste, impressions flattering to indolence and to the vanity that so often gives to the possessor of a certain degree of imagination high opinions of his own genius. This notion and these impressions suggest an examination of the relative authority of what are very different things, namely, the *laws* and the *rules* of Art.

It is to genius that we owe the discovery of all the laws of Nature yet known; and to genius do we look for future discoveries, or greater accuracy superadded to our present knowledge. Genius should, therefore, be the last to violate those principles it has been the

first to make known; and I believe it will be found that, so far from genius being lawless, its existence is proved by a knowledge of, and obedience to, the laws of Art, such as is never displayed by mere talent or cleverness, although the latter may often seem to adhere most closely to established precedent.

Rubens and Rembrandt are spoken of by Fuseli as painters who, "disdaining to acknowledge the usual laws of admission to the Temple of Fame, boldly forged their own keys, entered, and took possession, each of a most conspicuous place, by his own power." This, however, is but a striking mode of pointing out their great originality; for in another place he assumes that, had the art of painting been unknown, Rembrandt would have discovered it; thus making him a legislator in Art; and this he must have felt also to be true of Rubens, as it is of every painter so original.

But there is another ground for the notion that genius is often lawless. There is an order of minds—and many great ones have belonged to it—liable to be led by imagination into occasional exaggeration; and, as the generality of critics are blind to every excellence that is out of the beaten track, genius, in its extravagance, appears to the generality as setting all law at defiance.

The difference, however, between the eccentricities of great, and those of inferior painters is, that the first have always a perceptible foundation in Nature, and are often closely allied to her highest beauties; while the last are the result merely of inability to perceive the truth,

joined to the wish to attract notice. It may be said that exaggeration is least of all excusable in genius; and, admitting this, I do but contend that the wildest extremes of genius are more tolerable than the extremes by which vulgar minds seek to make themselves conspicuous.

Those who are best acquainted with Nature are always the most ready to tolerate the faults of great masters. And this will account for cases in which the opinions of the best artists are at issue with those of the public. It requires a close and long acquaintance with Art to penetrate through the disguise of exaggeration to natural principles, and also, in some cases, an acquaintance with what may be called the handwriting of great painters, fully to decipher their meaning. Not but that such peculiarities of execution as are intelligible only to the initiated are always defects; and, conceding this, a true critic may see, in the caprices of genius, though the public cannot, that

> ——— "the light that led astray
> Was light from Heaven."

I conceive there are no absolute laws in Art but those that are traceable to the laws of Nature; while by the rules of Art I understand the many forms or modes that have accumulated in the practice of schools, and which, however occasionally valuable, are far from requiring invariable obedience. "There are," says Reynolds, "some rules, whose absolute authority, like those of our nurses, continues no longer than while we are in a state of childhood. One of the first rules, for

instance, that I believe every master would give to a young pupil respecting his conduct and management of light and shadow, would be what Leonardo da Vinci has actually given,—that you must oppose a light ground to the shadowed side of your figure, and a dark ground to the light side. If Leonardo had lived to see the superior splendour and effect which has been since produced by exactly the contrary conduct,—by joining light to light, and shadow to shadow,—though without doubt he would have admired it, yet, as it ought not, so, probably, it would not be the first rule with which he would have begun his instructions." Now a very little observation of Nature will show us that, in *her* combinations, lights with lights and shades with shades are often united, and as often opposed. Neither principles are, therefore, laws, but merely methods of producing effect that are eligible or otherwise as it may happen; and there seems to me no good reason why the one should not be pointed out to the student at as early a period of his practice as the other.

The question, also debated by the French Academy, to which Sir Joshua alludes in his fourth discourse, whether Paul Veronese was right or wrong in his picture of Perseus and Andromeda, in representing the principle figure in shade, was a question merely about the violation of a rule, in most cases, perhaps, the best rule, but in no case a law.

In the picture that gave rise to the discussion, the figure of Andromeda, shaded by the rock to which she is chained, is opposed to a bright sky which makes her

as much the principal object as if she were in the fullest light; and the debate of the Academicians is exactly that kind of nonsense exposed in the admirable ridicule of the cant of criticism by Sterne; which is directed against the want of judgment and feeling with which forms and precedents are often insisted on as laws. Sterne himself deviated from the usual mode of writing, but he did not deviate from Nature; and, as his mode suited his own peculiar humour, we may infer that he would not have written so naturally in any other.

A well-known rule, and one rarely departed from, requires that in a composition of more than two or three figures, one or more should present their backs to the spectator, to avoid a theatrical or artificial look. Yet Leonardo da Vinci, in his great work, has entirely disregarded this rule, although peculiarly applicable to a subject consisting of a number of persons sitting at a table. He no doubt felt it to be of far greater consequence, at the point of time he has chosen, that the expression of every face in the picture should be seen; and who, I would ask, would lose one of those variously-animated countenances for somewhat more of probability in the general arrangement? The subject has been treated by Giotto, by Raphael, more than once, and it has been painted by Titian, by Nicolo Poussin, and other masters of less note, and I believe all have introduced back figures, and in many instances their arrangements are more picturesque. Yet not one, not even Raphael, has interested us in the story like Leonardo.

Another and a very different subject may be mentioned,—a work of Watteau,* in which all the ordinary rules of contrast are departed from with a result as charming and as natural as it is novel. Two pretty little girls, bearing a twin-like resemblance, seem, from the difference of their sizes, not to have been twins; and it was no doubt the object of the painter to show, as distinctly as possible, their remarkable likeness to each other; he therefore placed them side by side, dressed nearly alike, in attitudes as little varied as possible, their faces seen directly in front, and with the same light and shadow. Indeed all the usual contrasts of composition, expression, colour, and chiaroscuro are disregarded; yet the picture has not in the slightest degree any of that pedantic formality that so often affects to pass itself for simplicity. Here the simplicity is real; and though Watteau seems not to have thought of the Art or its rules, yet so consummate an artist was he, that this production is not less legitimate than any other of his works, while it is one of the most original pictures in the world; and I do not envy the feelings of those critics who, after admitting that it is an extremely pretty picture, would dismiss it with the cold remark that it is only portrait.

Watteau may possibly have been painting these little girls at the very time in which the members of the French Academy were proving Paul Veronese to be

* In the collection of Mr. Munro. It is the only picture by Watteau that I have seen in which the figures are of the size of life.

wrong in throwing a broad shadow over his Andromeda.* It is such trifling that has brought on Academies the reproach of a tendency to hinder rather than promote the advance of the Art, and such a spirit of criticism that made Constable say, "Never mind the dogmas of the schools, but get at the heart as you can."

Dr. Johnson said to Miss Burney, "There are three distinct kinds of judges upon all new authors or productions: the first are those who know no rules, but pronounce entirely from their natural taste or feelings; the second are those who know and judge by rules; and the third are those who know, but are above the rules. These last are those you should wish to satisfy. Next to them rate the natural judges; but ever despise those opinions that are formed by rules." What Dr. Johnson here meant by rules may be gathered from his preface to Shakespear, and particularly from those passages in which he defends the violation, by the great dramatist, of the unities of time and place, and his unclassical mixture of comedy with tragedy. Of Shakespear's attention to the *laws* of Nature he thus speaks:—"He was an exact surveyor of the inanimate world; his descriptions have always some peculiarities gathered by contemplating things as they really exist. * * * * Whether life or nature be his subject, he shows plainly that he has seen with his own eyes;

* Sir Edmund Head, in his "Handbook of the Spanish and French Schools," quotes, from Diderot, a very amusing account of the admission of Greuze into the French Academy, in which additional light is thrown on the notions then entertained by that body.

he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind. The ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are complete." Thus he vindicates Shakespear's faithful observance of the laws, while he fully justifies the wisdom of his dispensing with some of the established rules of dramatic Art.

It is the unfailing mark of a superior mind that, without contemning forms, it knows exactly when to break through them in obedience to great principles; and the occasions have been frequent enough in which such minds have encountered obloquy from the formalists of the world for the best actions. Every one's recollection will suggest instances of this, and some that it might be irreverent here to mention: but to take a trifling one, the story of the king (Lewis XIV., I believe) and the gentleman who stepped into the carriage before him, rather than keep his majesty waiting through ceremony, is as good an illustration of the sacrifice of a form to a principle as the most lofty example.

The prosperity of Art can only be promoted by the strictest observance of its laws and the proper use of its rules,—the first tested by the principles which are unalterable in Nature, the last by their admission of exceptions. The former are comparatively few and simple, while the name of the latter is legion, being accumulated from the varieties of practice of many artists, and students are therefore constantly perplexed by the various dogmas, often indeed contradictory, or apparently so, that are advanced by

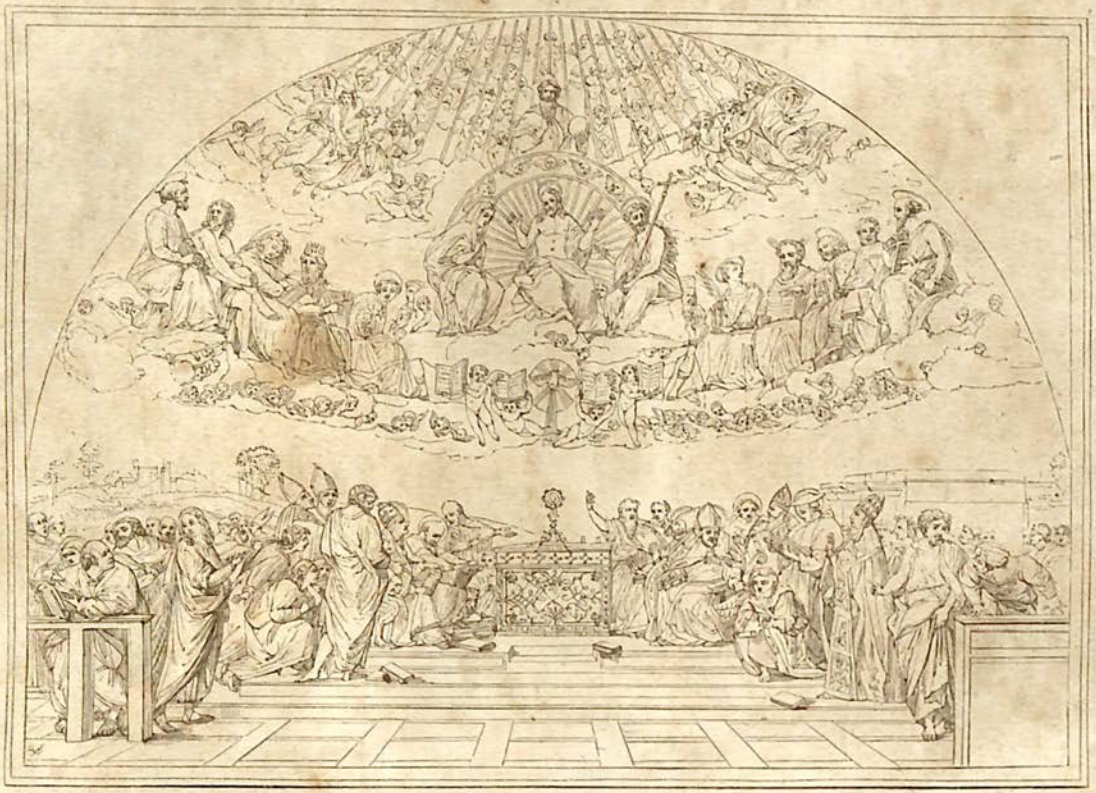
those of their companions who are a little before them. No doubt many valuable things are thus learned; but the great difficulty, at first, is to distinguish between the precepts that are founded in truth and the many that are merely empirical. I have known modest genius in early life defer to plausible but inferior minds, and submit to trammels that have affected, in some degree disadvantageously, the practice of an entire life.

There is, I believe, a good deal of what may be called honest quackery among painters; quackery, I mean, which those who practise it mistake for sound doctrine. One safeguard against this is, to beware of all rules that promise an easy acquirement of the Art, and to mistrust our own dexterity when we find it saving us the labour of thought. In the first discourse of Reynolds are some excellent remarks on that specious facility so often injurious to the young artist, and the assurance from him that "there is no easy way of becoming a good painter,"—from him, who had mastered with such apparent ease so many of the greatest difficulties,—should never be forgotten.

As it is impossible to enumerate the rules that abound in books, or that are given out in the conversation of painters, I will point to some instances of how far well-known rules are of authority, that may assist the student in judging of others when he may for the first time hear them. The leading principle of composition that applies equally to form, to colour, and to light and shade—the principle, namely, of subordination by which one mass is always the largest and no

two exactly equal, or, as West used to express it, "struggling with each other,"—is assuredly not a conventional principle, but founded entirely on natural law. With respect to forms, perspective is the chief agent of subordination, as it is often with respect to masses of colour, of light and shade; and, where it is not, the principles of the reflection, the transmission, and the interruptions of light, produce gradation, which is subordination.

This principle is therefore an invariable one; and from which, I will venture to say, no departure can be found in the works of any great master after the maturity of painting. But it must be remarked that, though the laws of Nature have been best obeyed by the best artists, the principles resulting from them are not always ostentatiously conspicuous in their works; and, indeed, Art is always the more perfect in the degree in which its impression is made by means that do not court notice. Wilkie remarks that he stood before the "Peter Martyr" of Titian, and found it not easy to ascertain which was the predominant light of the picture; and the same difficulty may be felt before other works of the greatest masters, where, however, the subtilty with which the principle is concealed is rather an excellence than a defect. Had Wilkie said that the "Peter Martyr" wanted breadth, or that its chiaroscuro distracted or perplexed the eye, this would have been saying that the natural laws of subordination, as they regard light and shade, were violated. I am only acquainted with this great work from copies; but from these, and from all I have read and



LA DISPUTA DEL SACRAMENTO—a fresco by RAPHAEL.

heard of it, I cannot doubt but that it is, in every respect, one of the most perfect pictures in the world, as well as one of the grandest.

An objection has been made to Raphael's "Dispute of the Sacrament" like Wilkie's doubt as to the predominant light in the "Peter Martyr." Dr. Kugler, who does not find fault with the entire separation of the two portions of this great work, thinks that "neither predominates by its mass; that neither, properly speaking, is the principle." But here, as in the "Peter Martyr," though the two great masses are nearly equal in quantity, their forms are dissimilar, and the upper portion is unquestionably, as it should be, the principle. Of the remark of Fuseli, that the picture is "cut sheer asunder," I shall have something to say in another place.

West, in his later practice, followed a rule in the arrangement of his colours founded on the order of colours in the rainbow. But I remember that in his house I saw a small copy, by himself, of the "Peter Martyr," in which I observed that the colours were placed contrary to their disposition in the rainbow; the largest quantity of blue, namely, in the sky, being on the side on which the light enters. I noticed this to him, and he said, "Titian had so fine an eye that he could produce harmony by any arrangement"—a reply which places all theories that make harmony dependent on any one system of composition, in the category of mere forms or modes, and not of laws.

Fifty years ago amateur and drawing-school practice was beset with rules at many of which a painter of the

present day would smile, and some of these were even countenanced by Reynolds. In what was considered the higher and more poetic style of landscape, *accidents*, (as they were called,) for instance partial gleams of sunshine, were forbidden; and Sir Joshua considered that Claude omitted such effects on principle. But I believe that where Claude has not availed himself of such beauties of effect, he was guided by no other principle than his feeling, that the sentiment of the picture did not require, and would be disturbed by them; for it is not conceivable that he considered any of the accidental appearances of Nature unworthy of the highest class of Art, if judiciously introduced.

Then there were Sir George Beaumont's rules, that in every landscape there should be at least one brown tree; and that every picture should have a first, second, and third light. "I see," he said, looking at a picture by Constable, "your first and your second lights, but I can't make out which is your third." Constable told this to Turner, who said, "You should have asked him how many lights Rubens introduced."

SECTION IV.

ON CLASSIFICATION.

CHARLES LAMB, in his "Essay on Hogarth,"* notices "that rage for classification, by which," as he says, "in matters of taste, at least, we are perpetually perplexing instead of arranging our ideas." For my own part, I have long since been accustomed to disregard classification in Art, according to subject; and, as in Sancho Panza's story, wherever the great man sat was the head of the table, so,—when I stand before that which impresses me as the work of a truly great painter, it belongs for the time being (in my mind) to the highest class of Art, let the subject be what it will. I say *for the time being*,—for I always recur to Michael Angelo and Raphael as the greatest of painters; not because they painted the most sublime subjects,—for hundreds who are now as nothing have done the same,—but because they brought the loftiest minds to *whatever* subject they treated.

The Art of every painter is modified by his feelings as much as by his intellect. Michael Angelo and Raphael lived in the most splendid, and at the same

* The best ever written; though it is to be regretted that, in praising Hogarth, he thought fit to disparage Reynolds.

time the most corrupt, age of modern Rome. The temperament of Michael Angelo disposed him to solitude; he knew and despised the world about him, and lived apart from it. But there was nothing cynical or morose in the character of this great man. He was warm-hearted, steady in his friendships, and sincerely religious in an age, as Roscoe well calls it, "of practical atheism." His attachment to his servant, Urbino, whom he waited on and nursed in his last illness, though he was then 82 years of age, is one among many proofs of the goodness and warmth of his heart; and the sincerity of his religion is not only seen in his sonnets, but confirmed by the fact, that, for the last seventeen years of his life, he devoted himself to the building of St. Peter's, entirely as a work of piety, refusing to receive any payment for his services.

Raphael, raised also above the world by every generous and noble feeling, yet lived in the midst of it, respected and beloved by all whose respect and love were worth the having. "He had always," says Lanzi, "possessed the power of engaging the affections of all with whom he was acquainted. Respectful to his master, he obtained from the Pope an assurance that his works on the ceiling of the Vatican should remain unmolested;—just towards his rivals, he expressed his gratitude to God that he had been born in the days of Michael Angelo;—gracious towards his pupils, he loved them, and entrusted them as his sons;—courteous to strangers, he cheerfully lent his aid to all who asked his advice;—and in order to make designs for others, or to direct them in their studies, he

sometimes even neglected his own work,—being alike incapable of refusing or delaying his inestimable aid."

Such were these wonderful men, alike in their greatness, yet with so much of difference in temperament, that they could not but affect us differently by their works. "We stand with awe before Michael Angelo," says Fuseli, "and tremble at the height to which he elevates us,—we embrace Raphael, and follow him whithersoever he chooses to lead us." But I shall reserve, for the present, what I have further to say of them. I have merely noticed the resemblance and difference of their natures, as accounting for the resemblance and difference of their Art.

When Sterne's critic speaks of the "Correggeisity of Correggio," the absurdity is in the sound and by no means in the sense; for such words as Raphaelesque, Titianesque, and Michael Angelesque are naturalised and indispensable to the language of criticism;—nor do I hesitate to say that every painter,—good—bad—and indifferent, *equally* expresses his own nature in his Art; for the most exact, the most servile imitator, in the endeavour to appropriate to himself the mind of another, displays the poverty of his own.

This influence is what the Germans call *the subjective* element, an element that leads to all that is most valuable in the imitation of Nature, or to all that is the reverse.

It may be said that among painters, and great ones, the minds of some are often not easily distinguishable, as in the cases of Giorgione and Titian. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the works of Giorgione or the early style of Titian to pronounce with certainty

what I believe to be true, that an intimate knowledge would enable a competent judge to distinguish between them in every case. It must be remembered that Giorgione died young, and there are instances of artists, contemporaries, who, up to the time of life at which he and Titian were separated, as closely resembled each other, but who afterwards displayed a marked difference of character. There are pictures by Rubens and by Vandyke, which may readily be mistaken for the work of either, yet how diverse do the powers of their minds appear when the products of the life of each are compared. Paul Veronese painted a "Nativity," in evident close imitation of the Bassans,—of whose style he was so great an admirer, that he placed his son as a pupil with Giacomo; yet the gentility of Paulo is apparent through the disguise; and I have seen skilful imitations by David Teniers of different masters, but in which he is always discoverable.

A resemblance in the styles of painters of very different minds is the result of another influence, that of the country and the age to which they belong. But the Art is a tell-tale, and no painter can effectually conceal himself in it from those who understand its language; and of all the qualities of the mind, there is nothing more sure to be betrayed by the pencil than innate vulgarity,—no matter with how high an aim, or with how much of learning or of technical power it endeavours to pass for what is lofty. On the other hand, a mind is sometimes discovered by the Art, alone, to be superior to any pre-judgment that might be formed

from our knowledge of the education or personal habits of the individual.

Of this, I know not a more remarkable instance than Morland, whose works display a natural refinement of taste which, as in the best Dutch Art, is the more striking from the homely character of his subjects. When we look at his pictures, we must conclude that the dissolute habits, which in the prime of life destroyed this extraordinary man, were in great part to be attributed to the denial of all education to him, excepting in Art, by a sordid father; and which greatly increased, if it did not produce, that shyness of manner which drove him from decent society to the alehouse and the stable; while it left him unfurnished with any resources of relaxation excepting in low indulgence. But whatever were the failings of Morland, and however to be accounted for, there is no vulgarity in his Art. He is always homely, often slight to a fault, and it is said he was employed by a patron to paint a series of immoral pictures;—yet such is the refinement of his colour, and his true feeling for the simplicity of Nature, that his best works will always sustain companionship with those of Gainsborough, which can be said of no painter in the least degree vulgar. Vulgarity, as Lord Byron has clearly shown, and I think he was the first to point out the distinction, is a very different thing from coarseness. "Fielding," as he says, "is often coarse, but never vulgar;" and the same may be said of Hogarth, of Jan Steen, and indeed of all the best Dutch and Flemish painters.

The essence of vulgarity, is *pretension;* and it, there-

fore, generally aspires to the high places of Art, where it shows itself in every species of false sentiment. It greatly affects the superfine,—it produces the mock heroic,—and all the numerous mistakes of the exaggerated for the grand and the poetic.

The vulgarity of pretension is often apparent in the modern treatment of religious subjects; but the most remarkable subversion of the Art by vulgarity, for it was vulgarity mixed with the highest refinements of vice, occurred in France in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth. It began, indeed, under that of his predecessor, a monarch who fancied he showed his taste by ordering the works of Teniers out of his rooms. It was natural that the court from which such sterling Art was banished should be the one from which Nicolo Poussin chose to banish himself. But the sovereign found a painter to his mind in Lebrun, a man of great ability, but essentially common-place, though showy and pompous. The style of Lebrun reigned supreme under royal patronage, and met with a host of imitators, until, still following the court fashions, French Art degenerated into that utter vulgarity which characterised it in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, under a surface of the amiable, the genteel, and what passed for the graceful. The exquisite taste of Watteau was, as might be expected, cast into the shade in this age of general corruption. But for his subjects he would have been as much out of place in France as Nicolo Poussin felt himself to be. He contrived, however, to unite the Opera with Nature (no easy task), and he therefore painted what fell in with the taste of the

times,—and yet has remained the delight of succeeding ages. The merits of Watteau, indeed, are such as almost to cover the multitude of sins, in Art, of the times in which he lived,—and this is saying much. There exist always Lebruns, Coypels, Bouchers, Rigauds, and Lancrets, and many of them, though not always detected under the disguises of the time,—while such painters as Poussin and Watteau are ever rare, and often in danger of being jostled aside by their more successful, though inferior, rivals.

I must remark that there is always a correspondence in the taste for colour and chiaroscuro and the taste in all the other elements of Painting. Thus, in these qualities, if Poussin is unequal, he is, in his best works, far above Lebrun,—and of Watteau, I need not say that in these, as well as in all technical skill, he is transcendent; and when we consider the difficulty that even genius finds in withstanding the influence of fashion, it is wonderful that he should have achieved what he did in the atmosphere in which he lived; and through which, he shines like a diamond surrounded by counterfeit gems.

The *objective*, according to the German classification, includes all that relates to the subject of the picture uninfluenced by the mind of the painter. But, strictly speaking, there can be no such thing; there can only be an approach to such an element, and the results of photography have been instanced as the nearest parallel to objective Art. Yet even these are not wholly objective, being always modified by peculiarities of taste. Points of view and points of distance, and effects of

light and of shadow are selected, with more or less judgment, in landscape and architecture; and in portrait there is the same exercise of taste, in the choice of attitude, grouping, casting of drapery, &c.

Properly speaking, it is Nature herself only that is *objective* or the object of Art; while all that is ideal or poetic, as well as all that is mannered, mean, low, false, or vicious in painting, is subjective.

The Art of Caravaggio and of Rembrandt may seem to be peculiarly subjective, and yet no painter was ever more objective than the first, in his pictures of gamblers, fortune-tellers, &c.; nor than Rembrandt in his portraits, a very large and important (by some critics thought the most important) portion of his works. Fuseli has been mentioned as a painter in whom the subjective tendency was entirely paramount; and yet his ghosts and demons are, to the imagination, more truly ghosts and demons than those of any other painter; and if an artist is to be ranked according to that in which he best succeeds, Fuseli should be classed with objective painters. Even Blake, a more extreme instance of a very singular mind, was convinced that he saw the illustrious dead, as well as angels and demons, of whom he drew exact portraits, and indeed most, if not all of the productions of Blake, were believed by himself, at least, to be strictly objective. I confess, therefore, I do not see how painters are to be classed according to either of these tendencies; for if I am right in considering all Art as equally subjective, though (apparently) that of certain painters may be more so than that of others, it must happen that where the

subject of the picture is entirely congenial with the mind of the artist, the result will combine, in perfect equality, both elements, and such are the instances in which every great master is best seen.

Nothing is more often on the lips of those who feel and know least of the qualities of which Painting is made than "High Art,"—and the result of more than forty years' observation has convinced me, that nothing has contributed more to retard the advancement of Painting than the well-meant, but often thoughtless and mistaken talk about what passes for it, both in England and on the Continent.

The common-place notion of High Art, contributed with other mental causes to the life of misery of the highly-gifted Haydon, as it had previously prevented the proper exercise of Barry's superior powers; and many were the junior artists, who, with this ignis fatuus before their eyes, wasted time, and probably talents that might otherwise have been productive, upon large Cartoons for Westminster Hall. Indeed, many English painters have passed through lives of privation, consoled only with the belief that they were practising "High Art" in evil days, who might have been prosperous men in some other profession.

Englishmen are constantly told by foreigners, and are constantly telling themselves, that High Art has never existed in England. True it is, there has been no British Michael Angelo, or Raphael, any more than there have been painters approaching to them in the modern schools of Italy, France, Germany, or Holland.

But the Art of Hogarth, of Reynolds, of Gainsborough, of Wilson, of Fuseli, of Opie, Stothard, Turner, Constable, Wilkie, and of Etty, and the Art displayed in Haydon's "Judgment of Solomon,"*—what are we to call it?—I care not what, but I will say that, out of Great Britain, nothing so *high* has been produced since the death of Watteau; whose Art, distinct from its subject, is of the highest order.

Latterly, the term "High" has generally been exchanged for "Religious," which means Art of which the subjects are from the Bible or the legends of the Church. I should make no objection to the definition as a matter of convenience, and if understood no otherwise than of Art of which the theme is religious. But, I fear, it is too much received, and intended as defining a style necessarily differing from other styles.

It is clear to me, that had any of the early Christian painters descended to subjects of familiar life, their treatment would not, in principle or in execution, have differed from that in their religious pictures, for in their portraits it did not. I think, therefore,

* Had such a picture been produced in France, it would have been placed in the Louvre immediately on the death of the painter. But the Trustees of our National Gallery missed the opportunity of securing it, for a nominal sum, while they were spending the public money on doubtful, or damaged, or second-rate pictures by the Old Masters.

Whatever may be the faults of this great work of Haydon, it would sustain itself with credit by the side of Rubens and his faults; and it will be disgraceful to the country, if it does not ultimately find a resting-place in the National Gallery.

that the attaching of more importance, than they deserve, to such definitions as *religious Art*, and *religious painters*, is calculated to blind us to many of the beauties of Nature, and to lead us to suppose that because, by the early masters, some of her grandest and most charming qualities were unperceived, they are inconsistent with religious feeling; and that there must be a marked difference between religious men, women, and children, and the rest of the world; and that even skies, trees, fields, rivers, and mountains may become religious and therefore sublime, by their unlikeness to Nature.* *Severe* is a word sometimes used, and I have heard also of *heroic* landscape. Such classifications are calculated to mislead the young, while they may be easily taken advantage of by the indolent and cunning, who, with little study or thought, may at once put themselves forward as religious painters, by some mannered deviation from Nature.

The tendency of modern classification is levelling. It places inferior excellence, if not in the same rank with the highest order of genius, yet so near it as greatly to mislead the student. There are critics who seem tired of hearing Raphael called "the Just," and who would give to Perugino, Francia, Massaccio, and other of the early Italians, a much larger share of his

* I have heard the singular little forms meant for clouds behind the heads of the Madonna and Saints of Francia, in the National Gallery, commended, because it seems impossible they could be affected by storms!—which is very true.

honours than is properly due to them. It matters little whether we consider the difference between him and them as a difference of kind or of degree; for if it be only the last it is certainly as wide a difference and of as many degrees, as that which separates Shakespear from all preceding and all succeeding dramatists. The painters I have mentioned no doubt resemble Raphael in many of the outward forms of Art, and his master, Perugino, may, as I have been told he does, often surpass him in colour. But where have they given any evidence of that knowledge of human nature, or of that power of expressing the characters and the passions of men, that so justly entitles Raphael to be called, as Fuseli calls him, "the painter of mankind"?

Take, for instance, the greatest of them, Masaccio. The subject of one of the most important of his works, said to be his last, is the resuscitation of a boy, a supposed miracle of St. Peter and St. Paul. The composition has all that natural simplicity so characteristic of the painter. But the incident, the most extraordinary that can be conceived, produces no effect on the people who witness it; and they stand by as unmoved, with the exception of a little girl (who clasps her hands), as if a restoration from death to life were a matter of no interest, and of every-day occurrence. And this is the work of a painter, who, though no critic would place him on a level with Raphael, yet, according to established classification, must rank, as a master of *High Art*, with the author of the frescoes of



RESUSCITATION OF THE KING'S SON—fresco by Masaccio and Filippino Lippi.

the Vatican, and the cartoons at Hampton Court. For my own part, I feel that it would be more just, and would enable us to understand the true scope of Art better, to class Ostade with Raphael. I say nothing of Rembrandt, because I consider his Art to be of a much higher order than that of any Italian, excepting only Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and the greatest of the Venetian painters.

As I do not think such painters as Masaccio, Perugino, Francia, and many others of their rank, are to be placed in the same category with the greatest masters, so neither do I think that such later Italians as Carlo Dolci, Carlo Marratti, &c., deserve by any means to rank with them. And yet the Art of these last, if classed according to subject, is High Art; while, in truth, there is not much deserving the name of Painting that can well be lower.

SECTION V

ON SELF-TEACHING.

FASHION is the substitute for taste, with which it sometimes coincides. Articles of dress and furniture may be elegant and yet fashionable, and a poet or a painter may be great and, at the same time, noticed by what is called the great world. Reynolds was twice in fashion, and Burns was the lion of a season in Edinburgh; but such instances are chances, not invariable results. The constant craving of fashion is for the new and the wonderful, and nothing brings a young artist more suddenly into notice than a report of his being entirely *self-taught.*

Those who know little of the history of Painting, generally understand these words literally, "in which sense," said Constable, "a self-taught painter is one taught by *a very ignorant person.*" There can, in truth, be no such prodigy in Europe, nor, indeed, in any part of the world, where painting even in its most primitive stages exists. Opie, who was himself believed to be a wonder of this kind, places in a strong light the insignificance of the power to be attained without precept or example. "On such an hypothesis," he says, "it

would be the height of absurdity to speak of the progress or cultivation of Art; the coming of a poet or a painter would be altogether accidental or providential, and the greatest artist might as probably have been Adam, or the first man that ever saw a pencil, as Apelles or Raphael, though born under the most favourable circumstances, when the Art was in its zenith. Nor ought we to have been more surprised, had Captain Cook found a Rubens carrying painting to perfection in Otaheite, than our ancestors were at seeing one doing the same thing in Flanders."

The young painter who, in the present day, should appear with any degree of ability, and yet deny his obligations to previous or contemporary Painters, would assuredly "say the thing that is not;" for no one can by any accident have been isolated from pictures or engravings, and yet have acquired the power of producing anything deserving the name of a picture.

Opie, as I have remarked, was suppposed to be a self-taught artist; and as he had as much claim to be so considered as any painter that ever lived, some attention to the particulars of his early life may help us to understand in what self-education really consists.

He was born in 1761 at the village of St. Agnes, about seven miles from the town of Truro, in Cornwall, where we may suppose there was very little of Art to be seen. He did, however, see, when very young, a school-fellow draw a butterfly, and said he thought he could draw a butterfly as well as Mark Oates.

At an early age he was employed as an errand-boy, by Dr. Wolcot, who, whatever were his faults, was a

man of sound taste. But Wolcot was not the first to discover the genius of his errand-boy; for the extraordinary powers of his mind were disclosed to all about him from a very early period. At the age of twelve he had mastered Euclid, and become the teacher of an evening school.

There can be no doubt, however, that Wolcot was Opie's first instructor in Art, and that he, who was very far from an incompetent teacher himself, directed him to a much higher source, the works of Reynolds. Wolcot had lived some years in London, and his love of painting had brought him acquainted with the principal artists. How truly he felt the excellence of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Wilson, and at a time when their reputations were far from being so securely established as they now are, his writings show. He, probably, had opportunities of intercourse with them all. I know that he possessed a fine picture by Sir Joshua, the "Sleeping Girl," now in the collection of Mr. Rogers. Beside this, he had some copies from Reynolds, and no doubt most of the prints from his best works. Some of these, we may believe, were on his walls, or in his folio at Truro, when the connection between him and Opie commenced. From Wolcot, or in his house, he could easily acquire a sufficient knowledge of anatomy with which his works show him not to be unacquainted. The only knowledge important to a painter of which he was ignorant when he came to London, was a knowledge of the Antique. His Art, therefore, from the first belonged to the school of the Naturalisti, and so it remained. If Opie came to London a competent artist,

and formed, as were all the best painters of the time, very much from the influence of Reynolds, he soon enlarged his perceptions from seeing the works of Fuseli, the evanescent negative colour of whose best pictures he greatly admired. The influence of Fuseli told on his later practice; but, on his first arrival in London, he began, as he had done in the country, with portraits; and there can be no doubt that Wolcot, by his pen, chiefly promoted the sudden notoriety of the "Cornish Wonder."

The street in which he lived was very soon so crowded with the coaches of the nobility that he was considered a nuisance in the neighbourhood. As might be expected, however, from the fickleness of all patronage bestowed on wonders, he was almost as suddenly deserted; and fortunately for his reputation, for then it was that he was taken by the hand by a truly noble patron of British Art, one indeed whose influence on Painting and Engraving in this country can scarcely be overrated.

It is said of Alderman Boydell, and I believe with truth, that "he contrived to employ every aspirant to distinction, in these arts, whose energies wanted encouragement." He was himself an artist, and his love of the profession he chose may be judged of by the fact that, at the age of twenty-one, he walked from Stanton, in Shropshire, to London, against the wishes of his father, to put himself apprentice to an engraver. That by his own exertions he rose to fame and fortune is less his praise than that he very greatly assisted other artists in their rise to eminence; men, too,

whom he helped to surpass himself, in his own profession. The Shakespear Gallery, though the greatest undertaking of Boydell, formed but a portion of his patronage of Art. This magnificent scheme was an additional means of employing the best painters of the British school in large and important works at a time when the Church refused to patronise Painting,* and the titled and wealthy of the land, with the single exception of the king, encouraged portrait only. It did much also for Engraving; and, among other admirable specimens of that Art, we owe to the Shakespear Gallery, Sharpe's transcendant work from West's "Lear," a work showing that the power of a first-rate engraver, even of other men's designs, does not lie within the scope of mere talent; but that it is *genius*, and of a higher order than that displayed by many a painter, who looks upon engravers, as artists much below him.

Boydell built, for the reception of his pictures, the rooms in Pall Mall, now belonging to the British Institution, and employed the greatest sculptor then

* Northcote in his very amusing history of "The Slighted Beauty" (Painting), thus contrasts her exclusion from our churches with the favour shown to her "Stony-hearted brazen-faced sister" (Sculpture), of whom he says, "She would make no scruple at any time to sap the principal pillars for support, root up the foundation, build up partition walls in the aisles, cover the pavement, &c. * * * One thing, however, must be allowed in favour of this sister, she always spoke well of the dead. Thus, for instance, she would get up in the midst of the church, and, in her own way, make long harangues in various languages, filled with flattery and falsehood, praising the dead to gratify the living."

living to decorate the front. It was his intention to bequeath the building and its contents to the nation. But the outbreak of the French Revolution, by stopping entirely the sale of his prints on the Continent, where it had been extensive, and the war that followed, diminishing the demand for them at home, his means were so crippled, that he was unable to fulfil his patriotic wish.

To the honour of Boydell, it should always be remembered that the project of the Shakespear Gallery originated in his wish to disprove the opinion held by foreigners, that English artists were incapable of excelling in historic or poetic subjects; an opinion that had entire possession of the minds of our aristocratic and wealthy classes, and which had forced Hogarth to address himself to the public through the medium of engraving.

When Opie, the plain, blunt, honest, man of genius was deserted by the world of fashion, Boydell engaged him in those works on which his fame now rests, the best of which, and one of the greatest works of the British School, is his "Death of David Rizzio," a picture that, instead of being *buried* in the Council Chamber, at Guildhall, should be *seen* in the National Gallery.

His love of Art was intense. It was said of him that, "as other artists painted to live, he lived only to paint." His life, indeed, seems to have been shortened by his industry. Had he worked less hard or been less ambitious to excel, he might now be living. Yet

he was modest, and long after the "Death of Rizzio" was produced, he would exclaim to his wife, in moments of depression, "I shall never, never make a painter."

Dissatisfaction with himself, however, no doubt contributed, as will ever be the case with a strong mind, to his excellence; it is the feeble who are liable to be discouraged into nothingness, while the conceited are apt to be elated into the same condition. The occasional despondency of such a man as Opie only rouses him to fresh exertion, and his history is a fair illustration of the true sense in which a great painter is self-taught, a sense, indeed, in which all great painters, men who know what they want, and who know where to look for it, are so. Their best instructors being often those they never saw.

Michael Angelo was taught the mechanical practice of painting by Ghirlandajo; but the master who completely awakened his imagination to the grandeur that was to become his distinction, was the unknown sculptor of that "mass of breathing stone" which refuses any other condition than that of a fragment. *

Raphael was first the pupil of his father then of Perugino, but had he stopped where the last left him, instead of seeking further instruction from every source of beauty and truth in Art and Nature that was within his reach, he would never have placed himself where he is, nearer to our hearts than any other painter that ever lived. The true masters of Rubens were Michael

* If Flaxman failed, as he himself thought, in his attempt to restore the Torso, who can hope to succeed?

Angelo and Titian, and certainly no one was less the master of Reynolds than Hudson, in whose house he was placed as a pupil.

When Sir Joshua says to the student "if you have great abilities industry will improve them," he says well, but it is to be regretted that he also said, "if you have not, industry will supply their place." When, however, at another time, he tells us that "nothing is denied to well-directed industry," he gives a comprehensive definition of genius in the three last words; for the industry of all the great painters I have mentioned was directed, as it could only be *well* directed, by that native mental superiority which the world has agreed to call genius.

SECTION VI.

ON GENIUS, IMAGINATION, AND TASTE.

GENIUS seems to be a rare coexistence of many faculties; or perhaps it may be more correct to say that the coexistence of many faculties is necessary to its development; and, as these vary in every individual, the genius of no two has ever been exactly alike. It seems also that the absence, or subordination of some of the intellectual tastes may be serviceable to the exercise of genius; for Leonardo da Vinci, whose life was a long one, has left fewer specimens than any other

painter, of that Art, of which he was so great an ornament, because he was almost a universal genius.

In connection with Painting it may be useful to consider two qualities, which, if they do not alone constitute genius, are essential to it,—Imagination and Taste.

Imagination seems to be a power to which instruction can scarcely reach, and if in any degree amenable to direction, it can only be so through Taste, a faculty that is admitted to be capable of much improvement by cultivation.

By Taste, in its most perfect condition, I understand a result from the union of the best sense with the most perfect senses, and the truest sensibility. It includes a knowledge and love of the good as well as of the beautiful, for material beauty can never be truly felt but by him who knows also what is moral beauty. Imagination may be considered as the active power of Genius—Taste as the controlling and directing power. It is the *temperance* which Shakespear recommended to the actors in their bursts of passion; but as he also told them, it is not *tameness*,—neither is it mere fastidiousness, much less timidity. It will dare everything for a great end, but it never seeks merely to astonish,—nor is it ever presumptuous. It is a power that estimates all things, relatively as well as singly, and therefore it is not exclusive; it objects not to ugliness or deformity, but it assigns to them their proper places. It objects only to falsehood; and this it detects as readily under the most magnificent disguises as when it affects the most childlike simplicity.

It would be easy to expatiate on the attributes of

Taste until it might be said I had proved that no man had ever possessed it; which is indeed true of a perfectly just taste; for, in the noblest works of Art, there exist flaws from the want of it, and which are in a great degree traceable to partial cultivation and the accidents of local position and defective education.

I have no hesitation in saying that every artist, whose name has lived, owes his immortality more to the excellence of his taste than to any other single endowment, because it displays all the rest to their fullest advantage; and without it his mind would be imperfectly seen; and if Taste be not the highest gift of the painter, it is, I think, the rarest.

The lofty imagination of Raphael, the wonderful fertility of his invention, with all his extraordinary dramatic power and his deep knowledge of human nature, would never have made him what he is, had it not been for that indescribable natural urbanity, that true decorum, which we can only associate with the purest taste, and which pervades every work of his hand, from his earliest attempts to the grandest of his frescoes. And the decorum of Raphael's mind is shown, not in his avoiding subjects which a less natural man might be afraid of, but in his treatment of every class of subject.

Compare, for instance, his "Galatea" with the same subject by Annibale Carracci, of which the National Gallery has the cartoon. In academic excellence the work of Annibale is not inferior to that of Raphael; but, without anything of affected prudery, there is a modesty in Raphael's picture, which by contrast would

vulgarise works even less gross than that of the Bolognese painter.

It is Taste only that can settle the difficult question of finish. A young painter, in the midst of a fine collection of pictures, is puzzled by seeing so wide a separation between great masters in the degree of attention they have given to minutiæ; but he will learn, as he becomes acquainted with the Art, that all pictures are finished if the intention of the master be fully conveyed; and that details may be omitted by Velasquez, or introduced by Terburgh, and the effect be equally satisfactory, because, whatever the one gives or the other leaves out, is given or omitted under the guidance of an exquisite taste. Who, for instance, while standing before the "Boar Hunt" by Velasquez, in our National Gallery, would desire more than he finds in it; or in looking at the "Blue Boddice" by Terburgh, in Her Majesty's Collection, would regret that the finish has been carried so far?

In speaking of Taste, hitherto, I have assumed the meaning that always accompanies the word when used by itself,—that is, good Taste. But good Taste may be considered as the exception, and bad, or, rather, mixed Taste as the rule. In cold or phlegmatic natures, Taste is satisfied with insipid correctness, hence mediocrity; but ardent temperaments have always strong relishes, and if these are not by Nature or education directed to what is true, their tendency will be to the false and the exaggerated. I need not say that the best and worst tastes have often been united in the same men; and where great powers of invention and execution are

joined to a false but plausible taste, the possessor of them is able to corrupt an age. Indeed, as Art appears to have sometimes risen to a great height at the bidding of a single commanding mind of rightly-directed powers, it has at other times sunk into corruption by the no less powerful influence of a single mind possessed of the ability to give to falsehood the appearance of truth.

Not but that there are always concurring circumstances in the state of society to facilitate either the ready admission of truth or of falsehood, and these act upon leaders as leaders again act on the multitude; and this affords a clue to one cause of the irregular progress of Art,—a progress marked ever since Painting may be said to have reached its maturity, by alternate periods of great vigour with periods of decay, sometimes verging on dissolution.

It is consolatory to know, however, that in most countries in which Painting has achieved great triumphs the achievement has not always been for once only, though it is of great importance to notice that different periods of excellence have always been marked by different characters of excellence.

SECTION VII.

ON THE IDEAL, AND ON BEAUTY OF FORM.

If we consider the ideal as comprising all in Painting that is not literal imitation of Nature, we shall include the most mannered as well as the most poetic Art; for the styles of such painters as Boucher and David are as much below literal imitation as the styles of Michael Angelo and Titian are above it.

But the ideal, as it relates to beauty of form, is far from being always removed from matter-of-fact; and it is in representations of the human figure only that a departure from the exact proportions and shape of the individual model becomes necessary. The Elgin horses are the closest possible copies of well-chosen living specimens; and in all natural forms, excepting of man, it is easy to meet with specimens of which, if the greatest painters can transfer to canvass literal copies, they may consider themselves fortunate.

Among the few faults in Flaxman's outlines may be noticed the conventional forms of some of the inferior animals. In the fifth plate of his "Iliad," the eagle by the side of Jupiter is merely heraldic in its figure, and the lions, oxen, and sheep, in others of his designs are but a remove or two nearer to Nature. Even his horses have something of the conventional forms of the inferior

styles of sculpture; but had his designs been made after he had seen the Elgin marbles, he would no doubt have paid as much attention to Nature in his horses as he has done in the forms and characters of his men and women.

From this we may observe how apt even the greatest artists are to rest contented, in some things, with the degree of excellence of such previous Art as is known to them. Raphael remained satisfied to repeat the horses of the earlier Italian painters, with their defective forms, and human eyes and expressions, though he was far from satisfied to repeat the figures of their men, women, and children.

The ideal, as a general principle, and not confined to form merely, is a principle so natural that the most untaught sign-painter paints his sky with the brightest blue and his fields and trees with the most vivid green he can procure, though he well knows he is exceeding the colours of Nature. But his notion is, that a picture must be an improvement on Nature—a notion always preceding the true settlement of what constitutes the ideal, namely, a selection from, and a combination of, the beauties of Nature as the only means by which Art can compensate for its unavoidable short-comings. "We cannot," said Sir Thomas Lawrence, "compete with Nature in the exquisite beauties she everywhere offers us, or in the minute delicacies of her finish; our only chance is in selection and combination."

The ideal I conceive to be not only the result of an inborn aspiration of all taste, but it is the sole condition of the very existence of Art; and, therefore,

where there is no selection, or where the selection is not under the guidance of judgment, there may be very good *Painting*, as far as it is merely copy, but there can be no *Art;* and it should be impressed on the student that though a good painter or copyist of Nature may obtain immediate fame, yet, unless he can rise to the rank of an *artist*, he will not outlive his generation; for the ideal is the poetic element by which, properly understood, and not by any classification of subject, high Art is distinguished from low or ordinary Art.

This principle is far from being confined to the beautiful or the perfect; for the hump-backed and near-sighted Sibyl of Michael Angelo is conceived in as great a style as anything by his hand; and Hogarth, in his own subjects, is as ideal as Raphael, because every face and form there is as well chosen for what he meant to express as are the faces and forms of Raphael.

"I work," said Raphael, "upon a certain *idea* that presents itself to my mind. Whether this idea has any artistic excellence I know not, but I do my best to attain it." Though the mind of Raphael was, no doubt, more than ordinarily formed for the reception of images of beauty and propriety from Nature, yet he was led to her by those "arbiters of form," the Greeks.

Angelico believed of himself that his pencil wrought by the immediate inspiration of Heaven, and thought it would be presumptuous to alter his first conceptions; yet, in one of the few pictures I have seen by his hand, the principal face, and that too of a divine personage, squints. The inspiration of Angelico was, in fact, no

other than that of Raphael. They both repeated, with more or less of beauty, what their contemporaries were doing and their predecessors had done, with the assistance of a scanty legacy from the wealth of Greece, gradually deteriorated as it passed through the hands of the Romans, while the empire declined; but by degrees recovered, as Art arose from a state of suspended animation to its full vigour in the fifteenth century. Even in our own days additions to this precious wealth have been made available to us; and while we are thankful, we must remember that, like all good things, the treasures of the antique may be used to our benefit or abused to our injury.

In studying the sculpture of the Greeks and Romans we must ascertain the principles on which they worked; for the mere mechanical process of copying their productions, however it may help us to obedience of hand and correctness of eye, will never make us masters of form. Nor can the antique be studied long to advantage without a constant reference to Nature; otherwise we shall become blinded to its occasional defects; as an instance of which may be noted a fault in the figure of the Laocoon, the sculptor of which has given an equal fulness to both the pectoral muscles, whereas the right arm being raised, would draw up the right pectoral muscle until it would become nearly flat.

I have remarked how easily even a great artist may be led away from beauty in blindly following previous Art; and, as this cannot be too strongly impressed on the student, I will here notice one of the most important works of Guido—the "Aurora," in which, as Fuseli

says, the goddess "deserves to precede hours less clumsy." There can be no doubt that these short and heavy figures are the result of Guido's admiration of the gods and goddesses on the walls of the Farnesini, for the defects of which Raphael is not wholly answerable, as they were painted from his designs chiefly by Julio Romano. The "Galatea," supposed to be entirely the work of Raphael, is, I believe, free, or, at any rate, freer from these faults.

But, whatever may be the defects in particular works of Raphael, he is ever present to my mind as *the one great painter of beauty*. Not of beauty merely resulting from exact proportion or elegance of form, neither as it is enhanced by colour; for in these respects he is often surpassed by other painters; and Fuseli may probably be right in saying "no face of Raphael's is perfectly beautiful," that is, perfect in the proportions of beauty.

But Raphael is the greatest painter of the highest intellectual beauty, the greatest painter of *loveliness*. Loveliness, independent on sex, and *always* the charm of his children. How much and how often this is assisted by incident and grace of attitude, I will not now enquire; nor would I by any means say that in the works of many other painters the same charm may not be found—a charm, however, that *pervades* the Art of Raphael and raises him above the Greek sculptors, in whose works the beauty of exact proportion and of grace is common enough, but among their female heads I know but of one that impresses me as *lovely*.

I am ignorant whether the Muses, of which the Academy has casts, are Greek or Roman, but the head of the Thalia is the most charming thing in sculpture I ever saw, uniting the utmost tenderness of expression with great beauty of features. The figure, peculiar in its proportions, being remarkably slender, entirely corresponds with the face, and the attitude is as graceful as that is charming. Indeed this delicate statue is, from head to foot, such a personification of feminine gentleness, refinement, and sensibility, as we meet with in Nature, much oftener than in Art, with all its boasted poetry.

In all, either of Sculpture or Painting, that I am acquainted with, the only face of equal beauty to that of the Thalia, is the face of Michael Angelo's Delphic Sibyl; and this I have seen only in a copy (but a most admirable one) by Mr. Richard Cook.* In the Sibyl as in the Thalia, the soul sits in the eyes and breathes from the lips. The Muse seems absorbed in tender thoughts, the Sibyl listens in wonderment to a heavenly voice; and if ever inspiration was painted, it is here.

The accidents that tend to impair the beauty of humanity are so much more numerous than those which affect any other forms, that it is not too much to say, perfect beauty of face and figure can never be found in man or woman. The human form, in infancy, has in most instances its greatest conceivable beauty;

* Some repairs were going on in the Sistine Chapel, and Mr. Cook had the advantage of making his drawing from a scaffold upon which he stood close to the fresco.

but the wearing of clothes soon impairs it; no leg or foot, for instance, can remain long unspoiled by the shoe or the garter. Nor is it form only that is injured by dress; the colour becomes unequal in the degree in which the body is more or less exposed to the air, and the portions most closely bandaged are tinged with an unhealthy yellowness. Luxury, and the injurious habits consequent on most of the employments of man contribute, with his vices, to the gradual injury of so much of beauty as may have been the birthright of the individual; and it is, therefore, only by the comparison of many instances, and a just selection of what remains best in each, that a standard of human form has ever been established.

All beauty is in a great degree relative. I need scarcely remark that the most perfect proportions of the woman are, in some respects, the reverse of beauty in the man; and the long body and short legs of the child would amount to deformity in the adult:—and the same is, in a degree, true of grace. The attitudes of children are proverbially graceful; yet there are some proper only to childhood, and which would be ridiculous in elder life,—as there are attitudes graceful in women that belong to them only. The slightly-inward inclination of the knees in the structure of the female may often be increased with an increase of grace,—but any such deviation from the straight line from the hip to the foot in man suggests weakness; and though the representation of peculiar characters may require us to give an effeminate structure to the man or a masculine one to the woman, this must

always be at the expense of the beauty proper to each.

There is a beauty peculiar to old age, to disease, to calamity; and in death there is a strange and peculiar beauty, I believe, in almost every instance.

With respect to the first, I cannot do better, than quote the following passage from the pen of a gifted lady.*

"The beauty of old age is, perhaps, more rare than that of any other time of life.—I mean, fewer attain to the beauty which adorns the hoary head;—but. when it is possessed, it is the most noble or the most lovely, because it is the most truly spiritual and the most truly moral of all beauty. Other beauty, though probably in a great degree dependent upon, and certainly in a great degree enhanced by moral, qualities, is yet in many respects an accident of forms and colours, but the beauty of old age is the *résumé* of the life of man. Upon that time-worn countenance the passions and the faults, the virtues and the feelings, the tenderness, love, benevolence—or envy, covetousness, selfishness, and rage, have written their characters in ineffaceable lines; and beautiful it is to see, as we often do see, faces actually plain to ugliness in their youth gradually expanding into beauty under the influence of goodness, sense, and worth; the eye brightening into a serene clearness; the lines of the countenance assuming a heavenly refinement and repose; the whole face glorified with a sweetness and loveliness not of this world. And it is the reverse—

* Mrs. Marsh, from "The Wilmingtons."

and alas! I fear more frequently—when the lovely features that delight us in youth, gradually lose their charm, as the insipidity of vanity, the scowl of disappointment, the dulness of vacuity, the sharp thin lines of vicious excitement, or the grosser ones of sensual enjoyment, gradually obscure what once was."

The beauty of disease, like that of old age, is chiefly, though not entirely, spiritual. The young boy or girl whose face and form were ordinary and commonplace while (as they seemed) in rude health, gradually appear refining into angels, as they waste away. The brightening of the eye with unearthly lustre, the delicate flush of the cheek, the pearliness of the teeth, and the attenuation of the whitening hands, all add inconceivably to the interest with which we look on the young, slowly wasting in decline, who seem (to use the words of Coleridge) "signed and sealed for Heaven."

The beauty and dignity superinduced by calamity, will, where there is anything of goodness or of thought, add more and more of goodness and thought to the features. The beggar who sat to Reynolds for his "Ugolino" was again selected by him as a model for a picture of "Resignation," suggested by the beautiful lines of Goldsmith. But we may believe it was only after years of privation that the head of this man, though the features were fine, became worthy of this subject, or fit for the "Ugolino."

But the beauty of death is not so easily explicable. How far its strange fascination may arise from the idea suggested of a repose, compared with which that

of the most tranquil sleep is agitation, I will not pretend to determine. I knew a man of the highest order of mind, a man of fine feelings, but of great simplicity, and far above all affectation, who, standing by the corpse of his wife, said—"it gives me very pleasurable sensations." And yet he had truly loved her.

The exquisite lines in "The Giaour," in which the present aspect of Greece is compared to a beautiful corpse, are familiar to every reader. Lord Byron, in a note to the passage, remarks that "this peculiar beauty remains but a few hours after death." But I have been told, by those in the habit of making casts, that on the second day the expression is generally improved, and even on the third day it is often still finer. I have, in several instances, been asked to make drawings from the dead, and though in every case I have entered the room where the body lay, somewhat reluctantly, yet I have invariably felt reluctant to quit it.

At Kreutsberg, near Bonn, there is a church, under the pavement of which lie, in one vault, the bodies of 25 monks, in open coffins. The dryness of the air has preserved them from decay, though the last buried has lain there for more than a century. I visited this church with a party of ladies, who at first hesitated to descend into the abode of the dead. We all, however, went down, each carrying a lighted taper, and such was the fascination of this singular scene that we lingered in it for some time. The air was perfectly pure, and we seemed to be in another world, with its own eternal interests effacing for the time all other

interests. It seemed to us a mistake that death should be represented by poets or by painters as a hideous phantom. We could not contemplate those withered faces of old men, for they seemed all old, and think of death otherwise than as a gentle friend. Their attitudes were varied, and all had a kind of grace, which, though we knew it to be arranged by their friends, seemed perfectly natural. One, the gardener, had a chaplet of withered leaves round his head. All were clothed in the dress of their order; and their clothes, as well as their bodies, though the last were dried to mummies, appeared to be little decayed.

Lord Byron says, "In death from a stab, the countenance preserves its traits of feeling or ferocity, and the mind its bias to the last." I can only say that in all the casts I have seen from those whose deaths have been violent or painful, I have noticed the same repose of the features and the same faint indication of a smile that assists in constituting the beauty of death in other cases. Causes wholly unconnected with the state of mind or feeling at the time of dissolution contribute, in individual cases, to beautify the features. The cast taken, very imperfectly, by Dr. Antomarchi, from the face of Napoleon, is more handsome than any bust or portrait of him; and, indeed, has the look of a much younger man than he appears in the latest portraits. This is easily accounted for. Illness had reduced the superabundant fleshiness of the lower part of his face, and brought it back to the condition of an early period; and death, by leaving the mouth slightly open, had destroyed that expression of selfish deter-

mination which the thin compressed lips give to every portrait of Napoleon. The profile of the cast is the most perfectly beautiful profile of a man I ever saw; and it should here be noticed that, as in this instance, the beauty added by death to a face originally of very fine proportions has nothing to do with metaphysical causes, so I believe it is the case in every instance; the faint smile being caused by the last slight convulsion after all consciousness has ceased.

From sheer indolence great mistakes are often made in the representations of death. Painters sometimes omit to leave the mouth open, and I have seen a naked corpse painted with the chest raised, as it could only be in the act of drawing breath, studied, of course, from a living model.

SECTION VIII.

ON DRAWING.

It is the practice in all schools in which drawing the human figure is taught, to begin with the antique; accompanied with the study of so much of anatomy as shall enable the painter to understand the causes of all the varieties of form and action.

Sir Joshua Reynolds frequently, and forcibly, and, I think, *convincingly*, inculcates the importance to the young painter of having the palette on his hand at the very commencement of his studies. He recommends that he should *paint* his studies as well as *draw* them, and it is probable he meant his studies from sculpture as well as those from nature; and I know it was the practice of one of our most distinguished living artists, and of some of his fellow students, to paint from the casts in the Royal Academy.

Stothard showed me some exquisite drawings of his own from the antique, with pen and ink only, the shadows being beautifully hatched in the manner of line engravings. He told me he adopted this method because, as he could not obliterate a line, it obliged him to *think* before he touched his paper; and no doubt it contributed to that certainty of hand and accuracy of eye which was so valuable to him in after life.

In the study of the antique marbles, an observing eye will soon discover that they are far from being of equal perfection. Many have been injured by restoration, which fortunately, however, the Elgin fragments have escaped, and it may be hoped will for ever escape; and many are not of the best times, which have always been the briefest times of Art. If the remains of Roman sculpture, whether by Greek or native artists, are not, on the whole, equal to the Greek Art of the Phidian era, they yet abound with works, for the preservation of which we cannot be too thankful. The mighty Farnese Hercules, and the Belvidere Apollo "coming forth as a bridegroom," are "for all time." Critics may find fault, and I remember that when the Elgin Theseus arrived in England, attempts were made to degrade the Hercules and Apollo by comparisons with a noble work as matchless as themselves; attempts that fully proved the wisdom of Constable's remark, that "no fine things will bear or want comparisons; every fine thing is unique."

There is, however, one celebrated antique in the attitude of which a serious defect has been pointed out by Dr. Spurzheim, a defect for which not all its excellence can atone. The hero, misnamed "The Fighting Gladiator," throws himself forward to attack, while his left arm is raised in defence; and yet a blow from a child on that arm would knock him to the ground; the right leg, which should render the attitude a firm one, being advanced instead of the other. Indeed, Nature would dictate a contrary position of the legs without any knowledge of the science

of defence, as will be at once felt if we attempt to place ourselves in the attitude. How such a serious fault should have been committed it is difficult to conceive. The only conjecture is, that the position of the limbs was arranged by the sculptor as a matter of composition, without, what would have been the better mode, desiring a living model to place himself in a fighting attitude.

Though the Royal Academy requires the attainment of a considerable degree of power in drawing from the antique before the student is admitted to the life, yet (out of school) the young painter cannot begin too soon to draw from nature, and particularly heads and hands; and in such practice, as well as when admitted to the life school, what is before him should be carefully copied without any attempt to improve defective forms. Nothing else need be said to recommend this mode of study than that it was practised by Flaxman and by Stothard.

A knowledge of anatomy may be abused, like all other knowledge, by its ostentatious display, or by allowing theories formed upon it to supersede observation. Both these causes contributed to faults in the forms of a late eminent painter, who was yet an enthusiastic admirer of the Elgin marbles, works not more remarkable for their anatomical truth than for its unobtrusiveness. Mr. Haydon was not only thoroughly acquainted with the structure and uses of the human bones and muscles, but he had paid much attention to comparative anatomy, and thence formed a theory of the ideal, which consisted in giving an emphasis to those

peculiarities of form which distinguish the man from the brute, where the character was to be noble; and where ignoble, in adding something of the brute peculiarities to the human form. Thus he raised the forehead and exaggerated its width, to express intellect, to an appearance of disease; and arched the bones of the foot (that it might deviate as much as possible from the flat foot of the monkey) into a form that would not be admired in nature, and that is not to be found in the best antiques.

As the Autobiography and Lectures of this extraordinary man will always be read with great interest, the student should be placed on his guard against the occasional carelessness of his assertions. In his second lecture, for instance, he tells us that "Raphael, instigated by his genius, adhered to the head and face as immediate vehicles of expression, and he gave the head an undue preponderance as to size. The Greeks generally made their figures seven, seven and a half, eight heads, and even nine heads high. Raphael seldom more than six, and sometimes five." This is quite untrue, as an examination of the cartoons will prove. Many of the figures in these would certainly measure eight heads, and I doubt if one can be found to measure so few as five or even six heads high. It is probable Raphael did not take the trouble to apply the compasses to his figures, as the same personages in different subjects differ in their proportions. At any rate it will be evident to any practised eye that the figures, generally, in the cartoons, as in the other works of Raphael, though of various

stature, do not differ in their general measurement from the antique, however they may vary from those of Michael Angelo, whose men are, as Fuseli says, "a race of giants."

Students learn much from each other, and much often that is valuable; but they should always be on their guard against fashions that creep into drawing schools from the practice of clever young men, to whom the rest look up. I have lately noticed a prevailing practice, in the Life School of the Royal Academy, of an equally strong pronunciation of the outline of the entire figure, which tends to inure the eye to a hard, detached method of representing form, unlike the manner in which Nature, with all her beautiful varieties of light and shade, always addresses herself to the eye. The library of the Royal Academy possesses about seventy drawings from the life, by Stothard, some very slight, and others exquisitely wrought, though few that are completely finished. They may, however, be strongly recommended to the notice of the student, who can never examine them without improvement of his perception of the beauties of Nature; and they may, I think, prove a safeguard against his being led into mannerism by the changing fashions of schools; though not if he attempts a literal imitation of them.

SECTION IX.

INVENTION AND EXPRESSION.

INSTANCES FROM THE OLD MASTERS.

THE inventive faculty is of as much importance to the painter of portrait as to the painter of history; and of as much also to the painter even of local landscape, all the features of which are capable of powerful expression in the hands of genius. But, for the present, I shall confine myself to the invention of the incidents of life and the expression of the passions.

Originality and skill in inventing or telling a story, and in expressing the passions, are kept alive only by the artist's powers of observation; and the difference between the greater or lesser painter results very much from this,—that the first thinks of his Art everywhere and at all times, the last in his painting-room only and at set hours. Hogarth, describing his own habits, says, "Be where I would, while my eyes were open, I was continually at my studies, and acquiring something useful to my profession;" and Stothard's sketch-books were filled with groups of figures and scenery made without selection, but merely of what chance offered to his notice while travelling; sometimes objects which the window of an inn presented while horses were changing, and sometimes what he saw from the

top of a stage-coach: and I would earnestly impress on all young artists, that the practice of redeeming spare moments of time by sketching whatever is thrown in their way is an invaluable one. Those who adopt it will be sure to be rewarded by often finding memoranda so made of far greater interest than they had imagined; and it will correct the habit, always fatal to originality, of going to Nature for things only that resemble what they have seen in Art. Among the drawings by Raphael, collected by Sir Thomas Lawrence, were many evidently of what chance presented to him. I recollect one, in particular, singularly elegant, of three or four young men in the dress of his time sitting at a table, and their attitudes but very slightly varied;—an accidental group, in all probability, of his pupils. The works of Michael Angelo abound in attitudes that seem as if taken immediately from Nature; and, indeed, most of the noble range of his prophets and sibyls have this look.

A subject happily adopted from Nature should not deprive the painter of the credit due to invention; for indeed the mere faculty of inventing an incident is far more common than the nice and quick perception of that in Nature which is fitted to the purposes of Art, and which ordinary observers would pass by, or reject, perhaps, as trifling or unworthy. Burns turned up a mouse with his plough, and was heard to say by a man who was at work with him, "I 'll make that mouse immortal!" And he kept his word.

The importance of the constant observation of Nature to the painter of real life will be readily admitted,

but such habits are of no less value to the painter of the most imaginative class of subjects.—The *supernatural* is not the *unnatural*. The centaur, the sphinx, the satyr, &c., are but combinations of Nature, and there is true taste shown in making these ideal beings act naturally,—as when, in a group of the Phygalian Marbles, a centaur bites his antagonist, and when Shakespear makes Bottom, the weaver, long for hay and oats when the ass's head is on his shoulders. Indeed, two of the most exquisitely poetic conceptions of Shakespear, the Oberon and Titania, when we look beyond the charm of their language, are the veriest man and wife that ever existed.

And here it may be useful to notice an instance of the substitution of the unnatural for the supernatural by a great master. In the picture by Nicolo Poussin, in the National Gallery, of "Perseus destroying his Adversaries by displaying the Gorgon's Head," the attempt to represent men half flesh and half stone suggests nothing to the eye but imperfect or damaged colouring. The subject, indeed, defies the painter's Art; and this failure is a single exception in the practice of a painter pre-eminently gifted with the power of making poetic fiction equally beautiful and probable to the eye.

The perception of what is false is, at least, a step towards the knowledge of what is true; and it will be found that the conventional and the affected are the result of that species of mind that will not let Nature have her own way;—that has formed, indeed, its notions of consistency independently on observation.

To explain what I mean, I would say that had such a mind to deal with a story of such love as that of Romeo and Juliet, it would have deemed it a profanation of the passion to make, as Shakespear has done, Juliet the successor of Rosaline in the heart of Romeo.

The ideal of such writers or painters is not an ideal of selection but an ideal of their own, or, I believe, in most cases, an ideal imitated from other similarly-constituted minds; for in all their productions there is a remarkable family likeness. Throughout their delineations of life there is an absence of all that delicate discrimination of the subtle lights and shades of character which a thorough and unbiassed acquaintance with the men and women that surround us can only teach. Instead of true representations of life, they give us faultless heroes and heroines opposed to characters of motiveless atrocity;—and when their subjects are above the world, they mistake the conventional so entirely for the ideal as to keep themselves equally out of the sphere of our sympathies.

Such minds remain in a state of perpetual childhood;—often they are highly amiable and as often cold and unsympathizing. With the best intentions, they can effect no good, but may very much mislead—for a writer or painter can only serve the cause of morality in the degree in which he is true to Nature. In Shakespear we discover no aim to enforce a moral, but he is the most moral of all dramatists, because he is the truest.

It is a mistake to suppose that human nature may not be studied within a confined limit. The constant

inhabitant of a village may learn far more of mankind, if he be a close and just observer, than he whose life is spent in roaming over the world, if he observes not carefully, and above all, if he studies not himself. Indeed, the opportunities of knowing a few individuals long and intimately are more favourable to a knowledge of character than seeing much of the surface of life, which is nearly all that is seen in travelling. Few men travelled less than Shakespear, than Raphael, or than Hogarth.

In the loose language in which the productions of Art are spoken of we often hear of the *creations* of the poet or the painter. But invention is *combination*, not *creation;* and in Painting whatever may with any degree of correctness be called *creation* can only be the monstrous or the false. Mannered Art of every description is properly a creation of the pencil. It has graces, expressions, styles of composition, lights, shades, and colours all its own, and all mistaken, by the mannerist himself and by his admirers, for the ideal. "The Art would be easily understood," said Constable, "if the mannerists had never existed."

Selection and Combination are, then, the principles on which Invention must work; and in recurring so frequently to these, I wish as much as possible to avoid splitting general principles into rules. The only mode in which instruction can be conveyed, after the principles derived from Nature are pointed out, is to draw attention, in detail, to the varieties of practice that have prevailed in different ages and schools, and ascertain how far they are founded in

truth,—not so much to recommend their imitation as to quicken powers that may serve as guides in new and untried ways.

Invention and Expression have always been the first qualities to display themselves in Art. In the dark ages, Religion was driven by the ferocity of the times into the Monastery and the Hermitage, whither she was accompanied by all that remained of learning. Convents, therefore, became the nurseries of Art and of Science, as well as of Religion; and Painting, in the hands of the mediæval artists, was consequently employed exclusively on contemplative and devotional subjects. It may be interesting to the antiquary, but it is useless to the artist, to go further back than to Giotti, in considering the inventive power; and whether, in the age of Julius or Leo, he might have been what Raphael was, is a question that it may be honourable to both to ask, but which it is fair to both that it should be left without an answer. As it is, the advantage, if it be but that of time, is on the side of Raphael, and he stands forward pre-eminently as the painter of Christianity, not confined to the cloister, but entering into the world, adapted to the world,—sympathising with all that is human, relieving the infirmities and satisfying all the real wants of our nature, to purify and to elevate it. And to be this it was necessary that Raphael should be, as Fuseli calls him, "the warm master of our sympathies," as well as heir to all the highest powers of the artists who preceded him.

The Cartoons make me present at the scenes they represent more than the works of any other painter

who has treated such subjects; and it is only in the recollection of them that I can fancy I have seen the Apostles. It may be unfair to judge entirely of Leonardo's "Last Supper" from the copy in our Academy, fine as it is, or I should say that, with the exception of that of the Saviour, all the heads there are less satisfactory than those of the same personages in the Cartoons.

In their representations of humanity, many of the earlier Italian painters seem to have given portraits of persons about them with little attention to propriety of character; in this respect resembling the *Naturalisti* of the latter part of the sixteenth century. They were ideal only in their impersonations of the divine. Where, however, their subjects are dramatic, their inventions are often very fine, and the engravings from the Campo Santo at Pisa show from whence many of the materials of Raphael and Michael Angelo were derived. But whatever Raphael adopted, from this great treasure house of Mediæval Art, he adopted to improve, which cannot perhaps be so strictly said of Michael Angelo, whose "Last Judgment" might perhaps have been better planned, as unquestionably the principal figure might be more finely conceived, had he never seen the "Last Judgment" of Orcagna.

The great work of that early painter, the "Triumph of Death," has, however, not been imitated, to my knowledge, in its principal feature; indeed the conception is so fine as to preclude amendment, the only justification of imitation. Nothing could be added, nothing taken from it without injury. Our asso-

ciations of the skeleton form with Death have, it is true, to be got rid of at the first sight of the beldame of Orcagna, an Atropos armed with a scythe, with streaming hair, and the wings and talons of a harpy. She disregards the solicitations of a group of beggars, and hastens towards a party of fair dames and gallant cavaliers who are seated under the shade of orange trees listening to minstrelsy, while Cupids are fluttering above them. This group is separated from the beggars by a heap of the dead and the dying, kings, queens, churchmen, warriors, lords, and ladies, many of them still grasping in their hands the things of the world. No finer sermon was ever painted;—and it has a passage which I cannot but notice because it does the highest honour to the painter's feelings, when we consider the spirit of the age in which he lived. Among the poor and the miserable who are calling on Death for relief, a wretched man extends his arms, from which both hands have been lopped by the barbarity of the law, which is evident from the mutilation also of his features. Now, though the obtrusion of objects of horror is, in most cases, unjustifiable,—yet here the humanity of the motive, undoubtedly that of interesting the better feelings of the rulers of his time, and opening their eyes to the cruelty of their laws, places the painter among the benefactors of his species.

Art was checked in its very beginning by the dread of idolatry; and it seems from this fear that the first Christian artists refrained, or were prohibited, from any attempt to introduce representations of the real person

of our Saviour into their works. Types were therefore resorted to, and hence the frequent preference of subjects from the Old Testament. Abraham, in the act of sacrificing Isaac, alluded to the one great Sacrifice,—the rock struck by Moses was the spiritual Rock, the Stream, the Well of salvation, and the ascension of Elijah to Heaven, the ascension of our Lord.

This system was adopted also by Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel, where Christ appears only as the Judge of the World.—And Raphael, in the frescoes of the Vatican, complimented the Popes Julius the Second and Leo the Tenth, by typical allusions to passages in their lives. The subjects in which he has done this were no doubt suggested to him, and not, perhaps, such as he would have chosen; but the skill with which he has managed the unavoidable anachronisms cannot be too highly praised.

When, however, near the close of his life, Raphael was employed by Leo to furnish a series of designs for tapestry, from the New Testament, to adorn the Sistine Chapel; he was no longer fettered by any other than the direct meaning of the story,—and he produced the Cartoons, of which the seven that (so fortunately for this country) belong to the Royal collection, and which are the only ones that exist, would alone have given him his transcendent reputation, were they the only series of his works known to us.

In the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" we see the Redeemer selecting his friends and ministers from the humblest class of men. In the "Charge to Peter" the choice is ratified in a still more solemn manner.

81253

In the "Death of Ananias" and in the "Punishment of Elymas" the Gospel purity is vindicated,—at Lystra, and at the Beautiful Gate, its beneficence is manifested,—while at Athens it opposes the pride of philosophy, and demands of the sophists that they should become as little children. It is true these subjects might have been selected, as some of them have been, by other painters; but the admirable propriety with which Raphael has treated them belongs to himself alone,—and there is not an instance in which any story of the series has been repeated by another hand, however great, which is not comparatively a failure.

But the Cartoons are not faultless. I care little for the mistake about the size of the boats in the "Miraculous Draught," but I do care about what seems to me a failure in the action and expression of St. Paul in the "Sacrifice at Lystra." Nothing can be more elegant than the lines of the figure; but (and this is rare indeed with Raphael) the meaning is not expressed. The left hand does not hold the drapery so that it could be torn, and the attitude altogether is wanting in the characteristic energy of St. Paul. How different is he from the earnest man who, in the Areopagus, directs the group of philosophers before him to the true God! Here is St. Paul himself,—the Paul whose fervid eloquence made Felix tremble and almost persuaded Agrippa to become a Christian as he stood in chains before them. In the whole wide range of Raphael's compositions, I know not one, indeed, in which truth of expression and discrimination of character are carried further than in this cartoon. How admirably has

he characterized the disciples of the various sects of philosophy, and how striking is the contrast presented to all these by the two nearest figures of the composition—Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris! Their hearts are penetrated; they regard what they hear, not as a system of human knowledge, but as divine truth; and they advance with a modest and earnest reverence to the Apostle,—expressed as Raphael alone could express it.

If the head of the Saviour, even as it appears in the copy which we possess of Leonardo's great work, be, as it seems to me, the best image of a countenance of which no representation can ever satisfy us, the heads in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" and the "Charge to Peter" are perhaps the next in value. The expression "divine" is often applied to human works by an hyperbole of language which custom has sanctioned, but where is the power that is to give the divine in expression, or where the authority by which the attainment is to be confirmed? With a lofty conception of humanity we must be content. In Leonardo's work such a conception shows us "The Man of Sorrows," in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" the gentlest of masters, but in the "Charge to Peter," where we expect so much more, Art could go no higher.

Are, then, such subjects as this or the "Transfiguration," or the "Last Judgment," not to be painted? Whatever may be the answer to this question, an objection that rests on the inadequacy of human powers would exclude much from Art that we should be sorry to lose. It would exclude, for instance, Claude's and

Turner's representations of the sun; and if Art may attempt nothing but with the hope of entire success, it would be limited indeed. In all that relates to the imitation of material Nature, this question is settled by the principle that deception is in no case the end of Painting; and in what relates to higher things it is a question that had better be left open.

In thinking of Raphael, I cannot but dissent from the opinion now in fashion with one class of critics, namely, that his earliest works are to be preferred for their religious sentiment to those of his riper years. It is very true that he did not diverge from the Bible and the legends of his church for his subjects till he was in the prime of life; but the Cartoons are among his latest productions,* and they display a heart as pure, as gentle, and as reverent of all holy things, as those of his youngest days; while, at the same time, they show such an extended knowledge of the world as might be expected from the date of their production. In that noble one, the "Charge to Peter," look at the attitude and expression of the kneeling saint! look at the earnestness and love with which John presses forward to his master! and at the surprise and reverential awe, mingled with something of fear, that prevents the rest of the disciples from clustering round their Lord! There is, to me, as much of deep religious feeling in this single picture as in all the "Holy Families" of his early hand, with all their loveliness and purity; and such pictures as this and the "Miraculous Draught

* Dr. Waagen makes him thirty, and Dr. Kügler thirty-two, when he commenced them.

of Fishes," and the "Death of Ananias," make me feel with Lavater, that "Raphael is, and ever will be, an *apostolic* man; in other words, he is, with regard to painters, what the apostles were with regard to the rest of mankind."—Who, I would ask, but Raphael, could have given a befitting expression to that extraordinary exclamation of St. Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? And who but Raphael has represented, *so truly*, the first-called disciples as lowly fishermen, and yet with a natural dignity befitting men selected for the regeneration of their species?

It is very easy for those who cannot impress on canvass the nice shades of human character and passion to mistake the absence of this power for purity of feeling, and the endless copyings in early Art of the attitudes of devotion, which were and are always to be seen in every Roman Catholic church, for religious sentiment. But because Raphael went out of the church and into the world,—where he has shown us the first and brightest appearances of Christianity among men of like passions with ourselves, as no other painter has shown them,—I cannot understand the spirit of that criticism that can speak of his *fall—the fall of Raphael!*—be it observed, long before he painted the Cartoons,—and that can at the same time dwell with admiration on the meanness and inanity of the saints of Francia, and his unchildlike children.

A fault of many painters, in their representations of childhood, is, that they make it taking an interest in what can only concern more advanced periods of life. But Raphael's children, unless the subject requires it should

be otherwise, are as we see them generally in nature, wholly unconcerned with the incidents that occupy the attention of their elders. Thus the boy in the cartoon of the "Beautiful Gate" pulls the girdle of his grandfather, who is entirely absorbed in what St. Peter is saying to the cripple. The child, impatient of delay, wants the old man to move on. In the "Sacrifice at Lystra," also, the two beautiful boys placed at the altar, to officiate at the ceremony, are too young to comprehend the meaning of what is going on about them. One is engrossed with the pipes on which he is playing, and the attention of the other is attracted by a ram brought for sacrifice. The quiet simplicity of these sweet children has an indescribably charming effect in this picture, where every other figure is under the influence of an excitement they alone do not partake in. Children, in the works of inferior painters, are often nothing else than little actors; but what I have noticed of Raphael's children is true, in many instances, of the children in the pictures of Rembrandt, Jan Steen, Hogarth, and other great painters, who, like Raphael, looked to nature for their incidents.

The great value of the Cartoons is much enhanced by the circumstance that, *being cartoons*, they are more entirely the work of Raphael's own hand than the frescoes of the Vatican. Whatever assistance he may have had in the painting of the architectural and landscape backgrounds, the heads, and most of the draperies, are the work of his hand.

Though Raphael did all things well, yet in scenes of tumult and violence he has often been excelled by other



HELIODORUS—a fresco by RAPHAEL.

painters. The "Sacrifice of the Innocents" (I do not allude to the ruined cartoon in the National Gallery, but to the more extensive composition engraved by Marc Antonio) is a subject I could wish he had never touched, were it not for the single figure of the mother sitting apart on the ground, and bending over the dead or dying child on her lap, with one hand on its breast. In this inimitable conception he has put his own seal on the picture; all the rest might have been the work of another hand. Even in the "Heliodorus," I fancy I see Raphael himself less in the overthrow of the spoiler, fine as that part of the composition is, than in the other wing of the picture. Rubens often surpasses him—as, indeed, he does all other painters with the exception of Michael Angelo—in subjects of rapid action; but he as often omits to avail himself of the contrast of calm dignity with tumult, which, in the "Heliodorus," atones for the introduction of Julius the Second as the witness of a miracle in the Jewish Temple, dating 200 years before the Christian era. For this anachronism the taste of the Pope is answerable, and not that of Raphael, who has managed it with consummate judgment. Though part of the picture, the Pope and his bearers form no part of the subject. He seems only to contemplate the *vision* of an event called to his mind by passages in his own life. And that it may be *fully* understood that the presence of Julius in the scene is not real, Raphael has not allowed his attendants to be in the least conscious of what is going on. They neither see the rush of the heavenly assailants on the fallen man, nor hear

the screams of the women and children close to them.

The group of Leo X. and his train in the "Attila," is equally valuable as affording the contrast of quiet dignity to consternation and tumult; but here the Pope and those with him are properly actors in the scene, the only anachronism being the substitution of Leo X. for Leo I.

In the "Battle of Constantine," painted by Julio Romana, after the death of Raphael, I can see little of the great master (though the design is said to be entirely Raphael's), but much of Julio Romana. The group of the veteran raising the body of the youthful standard-bearer, and the noble back-figure near it of a warrior bestriding his fallen horse, are unquestionably Raphael's, for his pupil has nowhere given evidence of powers equal to these. But the figure of Constantine, the winged victories that hover over him, and nearly everything else in this immense composition may well be given entirely to Julio, and with benefit rather than with loss to Raphael. Two other compositions in the Vatican, less spoken of, I think, than they deserve to be, namely the "Coronation of Charlemagne," and the "Oath of Leo X.," are evidently and wholly designs of Raphael, though painted, I believe, chiefly by his scholars.

Few stories can be entirely told by the pencil, nor is it, therefore, any objection to a subject that it requires explanation not in the power of Art to give. The "Last Supper," of Leonardo, and Raphael's "Charge to Peter," would make but very imperfect

impressions on a spectator ignorant of the words spoken by the principal personage in each of these pictures; and we judge of an artist's powers of invention and expression not so much from his making us acquainted with a story, as from the degree in which his work coincides with a narrative previously known to us.

There is no subject in which Raphael has displayed more taste and judgment than in the "Miracle at Bolsena," one of the most unmanageable stories that could be proposed to an artist. A disbelieving priest, while officiating at the altar, is converted by seeing blood flow from the consecrated wafer;—and how is this to be expressed?—As Raphael has painted it, no change in his attitude takes place, nor is there any expression in the face of the priest sufficiently marked to indicate that he sees anything extraordinary in the wafer which he holds in his hand. His look is rather that of stupefaction than surprise, but even this is not strongly marked. Northcote discovered the blush of conscious shame on his cheek, and it is natural in such circumstances that he should redden—and quite as natural that he should turn pale. But I doubt whether Raphael would have relied on so uncertain an indication as complexion, which might be constitutionally either red or pale. I think it more likely that he considered—however strong might be the emotion of the priest, placed as he was at the high altar, in the presence of the Pope, and with the eyes of the multitude upon him—he would possess the power of concealing his feelings, at least as long as he

retained any consciousness of his situation; and, indeed, being a disbeliever, the daily exercise of his sacred function must have made him an habitual dissembler. The most emphatic expressions of surprise, of terror, of adoration, and of love, are seen in the faces and attitudes of all by whom, from their position, the bleeding Host can be seen; and it is evident that the point of time chosen by Raphael is the moment in which the miracle is discovered, by its effect not having spread beyond the nearest spectators. The astonishment, therefore, of the priest must at that instant be extreme; but a start or expression of terror would have united him in feeling with the groups behind him, and adoration would have been too sudden in one who up to that moment was an infidel. Vasari speaks of the "*irresolution*" of the priest—and this, there can be little doubt, was the intended expression; irresolution, arising from a conflict of feelings, suppressing for an instant the predominance of any one.—So far the main subject. The rest of the picture is made up of episodes of dignity, of grace, and of tenderness, such as the mind of Raphael could alone supply,—and which render this, though the theme is unfavourable, one of the very finest of his works.

I have no intention of going regularly through the Stanze of Raphael, otherwise that exceedingly beautiful composition the "Dispute of the Sacrament" should have been mentioned first. Its striking peculiarity, namely, the *entire* separation of its upper and lower portions, is the separation of Heaven and Earth, and, instead of being on any principle objectionable, consti-



THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS—a fresco by RAPHAEL



POETRY, OR THE PARNASSUS—a fresco by RAPHAEL.

tutes, in my mind, one of the beauties of a work abounding in beauties. No wonder that, on its completion, Raphael was commissioned by the Pope to cover the entire walls of the Vatican.

What I have said of the anachronisms in the "Attila" and the "Heliodorus," does not apply to those in the "Parnassus" and the "School of Athens;" there the subjects, as they do not relate a story, are greatly enriched by the introduction of the poets and philosophers of different epochs. The judgment with which Raphael has arranged the philosophers and their disciples in the "School of Athens" has been often dwelt on. Sterne says of the figure of Socrates, that it is "so exquisitely imagined that even the particular manner of the reasoning of the philosopher is expressed by it,—for he holds the forefinger of his left hand between the forefinger and thumb of his right; and seems as if he were saying to the libertine he is reclaiming—'You *grant me* this; and this, and this, I don't ask of you: they follow of themselves in course.'" Perhaps this remark is somewhat fanciful; but unquestionably the entire management of the group of which Socrates forms the principal figure is most admirable. The characteristic and extreme simplicity of the dress of the philosopher would have made it difficult to distinguish him among so many more imposing personages, were it not for the attention paid to him by Alcibiades,—whose elegant and striking figure, so distinct from everything else in the picture, at the first glance arrests our attention. Raphael has also shown the most consummate know-

ledge of character in the introduction of Diogenes. The old cynic has thrown himself on the steps that cross the picture, in the most conspicuous place, in the very centre of the composition, with a careless air, and an attitude that plainly shows his contempt for all about him, as well as his desire of being noticed. It reminds us of his saying to Plato, while soiling his beautiful carpet with his feet, "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato,"—and of the reply, "Yes, Diogenes, but with still greater pride."

The obligations of Raphael to Michael Angelo have, I think, been over-stated by most writers, and Reynolds is wholly unjust when he says, "It is to Michael Angelo that we owe even the existence of Raphael; it is to him Raphael owes the grandeur of his style. He was taught by him to elevate his thoughts, and to conceive his subjects with dignity. His genius, however formed to blaze and to shine, might, like fire in combustible matter, for ever have lain dormant, if it had not caught a spark by its contact with Michael Angelo."—On the other hand, the attempts of some of Raphael's admirers to place him above his illustrious contemporary, by ascribing to him equal sublimity of conception in addition to all his own peculiar excellences, are unjust to Michael Angelo. The crowning excellence of each is entirely his own. The Sibyls of Raphael have been compared to those of Michael Angelo, yet there is but one among them that recalls the Sibyls of the Sistine Chapel,—and that, I think, only to show its want of the peculiar grandeur that characterised Michael Angelo; while the rest are

emanations entirely of the mind of Raphael. There can be no doubt that Raphael was fired and stimulated to fresh exertions by the sight of his great rival's works, but I am not sure that he may not have added from them something to his own style that did not improve it,—perhaps that occasional muscular heaviness of form, which is only great as managed by Michael Angelo. Indeed, in all the figures of Raphael that remind me most of the Sistine Chapel, he seems below himself.

I have not a doubt but that those critics are right who ascribe to Michael Angelo an acquaintance with the resources of Art beyond that of Raphael. Even from prints and copies it seems evident that he was in possession of that great source of the sublime, chiaroscuro, to an extent far beyond Raphael; and this, no doubt, with those excellences of colour, noticed by Fuseli and by Wilkie, in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, will account for the strong impression made by him on Reynolds, who was at first sight disappointed with the Vatican.—But then, on the other hand, how exquisite must be the innate charm of Raphael, to enable him to contend with so powerful a rival, and *so* to contend as, at least, to divide the opinion of the world on their respective merits, down to the present time; and which he never could have done had he owed as much to Michael Angelo as is often supposed.

The "Raising of Lazarus" would prove to me, if the portraits of himself and the Cardinal Hyppolito de Medicis had not already done so, that Sebastian

del Piombo was a great portrait painter; but the "Raising of Lazarus" proves to me, in addition, that he was only a portrait painter. It is placed beyond a doubt that the figure of Lazarus was designed by Michael Angelo,—and with that exception the story is not in any one point told. In the figure of the Saviour, composition is all that has been thought of; and, indeed, it is evident that Sebastian wanted entirely that power of imagination by which Raphael and other great painters have been able, before commencing their work, to make themselves, as it were, present at the events they were to embody. Lazarus has come forth, and is being loosed from his grave-clothes; yet neither of his sisters turns her eyes to him. Indeed, Martha averts her head with an attitude and expression as unmistakeable as it was unworthy and inaccurate in the painter to have given it to her; for though the allusion to the corruption of the body, in the history, is of importance, as substantiating the truth of the miracle, its effect must have been dispelled by the return of life. The old man kneeling on the opposite side is probably intended for St. Peter; but if so, he is too old, and his action is neither natural, graceful, nor dignified. The picture is, however, filled with portraits admirably painted; among which the profile of a young man in a green and orange drapery, behind the figure of the Saviour, is particularly fine.*

* I speak of this picture rather as I recollect it—when it *could* be seen, and as it may appear at some future time, if the guardians of the National Gallery should ever be permitted to have it cleaned.

It seemed right, after speaking of Raphael, to point out what I conceive to be the defects of this work, because it is one with which we are all intimately acquainted, and because it may be useful to notice the failures of Art as well as its successes; and because the errors of such a painter as Sebastian are likely to be the more mischievous from the influence of his name and real merit.

Fuseli has spoken so fully and so admirably of Michael Angelo that it would be presumptuous in me to dwell on the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, and the more so as I know them only from copies and engravings.

I do not, however, recollect that the peculiar conception of the "Judith and Holofernes" has been pointed out by any commentator. The headless man turns on his couch, and the rustling of the curtains, occasioned by his upraised and moving arm, causes Judith, who has just escaped from the tent, to look back. Thus the terror of the scene is indescribably heightened by an attention to the fact of the continuation of muscular motion, for a short time, after decapitation.*

I am not aware of any treatment like this by any other painter; and it is worthy of remark, that Michael Angelo, while he has thus made the subject in the highest degree terrific, has concealed the neck of the victim, and so avoided a display of what would be merely sickening.

* This fact was noticed recently at the beheading of a number of Chinese pirates.

The Cartoon of Pisa is a work of entire invention; and varied and admirable as are its incidents, one of the finest consists, in itself, of nothing more than the tearing of a stocking. Connected, however, with the story, and expressive of the eagerness of the veteran who forces his dripping foot through it, in his haste to obey the summons of the trumpet, it becomes heroic. Nicolo Poussin has almost exactly copied this finely-conceived figure in his "Sacrament of Baptism," but there the action wants the motive that animates the old soldier of Michael Angelo, and the translation of the figure, bereft of so much of its meaning, cannot be justified.

Instances may be selected from the works of Titian, in which neither the expression nor the story could be carried further. His "Entombment of Christ" in the Louvre, is a picture of the truest and deepest pathos, and would be so even were it unaided by its solemn evening effect. Nothing was ever conceived finer than the Mother, supported by the Magdalen, and contrasted by a different though equally poignant expression of grief.

In a small picture by Titian, belonging to Mr. Rogers, of the apparition of our Lord in the garden to Mary, the treatment is scarcely below the subject, even in the principal figure,—but the conception of the Magdalen is beyond all praise. She seems to run forward towards her Master on her knees,—her streaming hair and drapery denoting the utmost rapidity of action, while her hand, extended to touch Him, is suddenly checked by his words. This is to me by



SOLDIERS BATHING IN THE ARNO—CARTOON OF PISA

far the most expressive conception of the subject with which I am acquainted.

The Venetian painters dealt much in allegory;—but in some instances their meaning is obscure; and of one of the finest subjects of this class by Titian the key seems to be entirely lost. It is called, for want, as I think, of the true name, "Sacred and Profane Love," and is a striking proof of what I have insisted on—that the Poetry of Art is something wholly independent on subject; for in this beautiful work the Poetry is spread all over the canvass.

Had Titian intended the picture for what it is called, I am confident that he would have felt no difficulty in characterizing the personifications more clearly. But his meaning is more evident in a lesser work, the "Ages of Human Life," in the possession of the Earl of Ellesmere.—On the right of this picture two children are asleep close to a road (the road of Life). One has been gathering flowers by the wayside, which are dropping from his hands, while a third child, who is the only one winged, is climbing the stem of a withered tree. In the middle distance an old man sits on the ground in deep meditation, with a skull in each hand. Age has brought convictions that are unthought of by a young shepherd and shepherdess in the foreground. She is yet but little more than a child, and the youth seems for the first time to regard her with love,—while she, wholly unconscious of this, looks innocently in his face. Nothing can be more charming than the expression of this pair, though they might have had more of personal beauty, and I

remember when I first saw the picture I felt this as a drawback, which has long ceased to be one with me, for it is with pictures as in real life,—we cease to think of the absence of beauty in those with whom we have become interested by long acquaintance.

In looking at such pictures, however, the allegory is apt to be forgotten in the actors. In the fine Paul Veronese, belonging to Mr. Hope, the painter has represented himself between Virtue and Vice, and choosing Virtue. Yet he looks back, and no wonder, for Vice is beautiful to the eye, and the almost invisible talons that he has placed at the ends of her fingers do not interfere with the exact symmetry of her hands and arms. Many other instances might be mentioned of allegoric invention in which the moral intention, to say the least, is rendered nugatory by the mode of treatment. And even where this is not the case, we can hardly suppose that any man has been made better because Hercules (on canvass) prefers good to evil; or less ambitious of worldly honours, or less greedy of wealth, because a personification of wisdom tramples crowns, and sceptres, and jewels, under her feet.

The truth is, such subjects have probably been rather chosen with a view to the picturesque than with any very serious aim, by Paul Veronese and by Rubens. The picturesque was, indeed, always uppermost in the mind of the latter, when the choice of his subject was left to him. In the autograph letter preserved at Cologne, he gives as a reason for selecting the "Crucifixion of St. Peter" as an altar-piece for

the church in which he was christened, that the circumstance of the head of the Saint being downward made a novel and fine incident for a picture. This is the ruling principle also of his magnificent history of Mary de Medicis, in a series of subjects which he was fortunately allowed to treat entirely in his own way;—for, however our individual tastes may object to this or that mode of treatment, it is best always that the painter should do that which he can best do. When Reynolds expressed great admiration of a style of Art unlike his own, Northcote asked him why he did not attempt it,—and the reply was, "A painter cannot always do what he may wish,—he must content himself with doing what he can."

But here I must notice the wide difference between allegory, in the hands of Paul Veronese and of Rubens, and the noble use to which it may be applied, as in the example I have taken from Orcagna's "Triumph of Death," where it is paramount, and so simply and earnestly expressed as to be intelligible to every mind.

At present I say nothing of the powers of invention and expression displayed by the Dutch and Flemish painters, as I have devoted a section entirely to the varied excellences of the great masters of these schools.

SECTION X.

INVENTION AND EXPRESSION.

INSTANCES TAKEN FROM THE BRITISH SCHOOL.

In invention and expression, the only master whose works, taken altogether, I would compare with those of Raphael, is Hogarth. Nor is the transition from the one to the other so sudden as it may at first sight appear. They were both pre-eminently the painters of mankind, though the range of subject they each took, and the peculiar patronage of Raphael, and the no-patronage of Hogarth, made a wide separation between them. Raphael has given us an endless variety of images of all that is most dignified, most pure, and most graceful in our nature, yet never at the expense of probability; while Hogarth, the boldest satirist who ever held a pencil, has deeply "sounded the base string of humility," and by the exposure of vice illustrated virtue. Yet there is a common ground on which they meet,—the wide field of negative character.

Hogarth has been called "a writer of comedy with the pencil," but there is as much of the deepest tragedy in his works. Most of his subjects are entirely of his own invention; and in the story of what may be called his dramas, he adheres more closely to nature than the generality of even the best dramatic writers. His

profligates and villains never reform unnaturally at the conclusion of the story, but die as they have lived, villains and profligates; nor are there to be found in his conceptions of character any of those inconsistencies by which dramatic authors appeal to the passing prejudices of the time, or seek to propitiate a mixed multitude,—in the majority of which the moral taste is never of the highest standard. He does not give his prodigals generous and noble qualities, nor is trickery ever countenanced in his stories by the practice of people he means to represent as respectable. In truth, though the stage seems to have suggested to him the species of Art of which he may be considered the inventor, yet his views of life were much too sound to allow him to adopt the loose notions of stage morality.

Wit was ever at the point of his pencil, and his humour is inexhaustible, and as rich as the humour of Shakespear himself. Extreme as are his incidents, there is no exaggeration, and the enduring truth of his representations of life is confirmed by the occurrences of every day. Some of his scenes, from change of manners and fashions, may not be exactly acted now, but his characters are eternal. He has been charged with caricature, and the City volunteers attending the Lord Mayor's Procession, the slight etching called "France," and one or two other instances from among his numerous productions, may fairly be given up as caricature; but, taken altogether, nothing can be more distinct than the Art of Hogarth from that of the caricaturist—a distinction which he has well

pointed out in the etching he published to refute the charge.

No painter whatever, and but few writers have laid bare the evil dispositions of human nature and their inevitable consequences with such a mastery of illustration. From his moral teaching there is no escape. No palliation of vice will avail before him. Drunkenness cannot shelter itself under the mantle of good fellowship, nor lust assume the name of love. He has traced wickedness and profligacy through all the degrees of villany, recklessness, passion, hypocrisy, and cunning, cold, calculating selfishness. Yet, never losing sight of Nature, he here and there shows us touches of good,—and often, as in the world, where we least expect it. The squat little servant in the "Harlot's Progress" is not introduced merely by way of contrast to the beauty of her mistress; she is faithful to her in adversity, and receives her last breath while the doctors are quarrelling about their nostrums, and the housemaid is robbing the dying woman. The episode, in the "Rake's Progress," of the poor girl's story to whom he has broken a promise of marriage, is very touching. She offers her hard earnings to release him when he is arrested for debt,—she follows him to prison, and ministers to him in the last scene of his wretched career, the mad-house. In the "Election Dinner," also, in the midst of corruption and disorder, a poor tailor steadily resists the bribe of a handful of gold almost forced upon him, while his masculine termagant wife threatens him with her vengeance for having a conscience; and in another of the election pictures,

the "Polling," the dignity of human nature is supported by the maimed veteran who, having lost both hands and a leg in the service of his country, has contrived to place his hat reverently under the stump of one arm, while he lays the hook which serves him for a hand on the Bible.

It is clear, from these and many other incidents of a like kind spread through Hogarth's pictures, that had he been a writer he never would have conceived Swift's "Yahoos." His heart would not have allowed him, much less his judgment — for he knew that in the degree in which satire is exaggerated it always loses its power.

Walpole remarks that the severity of Hogarth's satire is "tempered with benevolence;" and his calling our attention to the frequent union of virtue, not only with the homely, but with the ridiculous, are among the proofs of this. If he had not an elevated sense of beauty, I know not any painter in whose works so many extremely pretty female faces are to be found; and though they are often given to negative characters, yet he could combine great beauty and delicacy of feature with utter physiognomical depravity, as in some of the women in the third plate of the "Rake's Progress." On the other hand, he has noticed that great worthiness is often connected with the reverse of beauty. The poor tailor I have mentioned, who at the election dinner steadily resists a large bribe almost forced on him, squints; and so does the faithful servant of the drunken freemason, who conducts his master home through the perils of the fifth of November. The

seamstress, also, who throughout the series of the "Rake's Progress" forgets all the injuries of her worthless seducer, and endeavours to alleviate his miseries in a mad-house, has by no means so much of personal beauty as Hogarth has bestowed on the actress rehearsing the part of Juno, among the strollers, in a barn,* and on the Helen of his "Southwark Fair," who, as she beats her drum to collect an audience, has attracted, without being apparently conscious of it, not only the admiration, but the profound respect of a couple of peasants, one of whom, as he walks by her side with his eyes rivetted to her face, dares not put his hat on his head.

It has been erroneously stated that the picture of "Southwark Fair" was destroyed by fire. But it is in the possession of the Duke of Newcastle, by whose kindness the public have lately had an opportunity of seeing it at the British Institution. It differs considerably in effect of light and dark from the print, and we see more distinctly in it what Hogarth intended as the principal points. His was a genius that delighted to touch, and knew how to touch, the master-chords of human nature; and, in the foreground groups of this picture, the admiration of beauty by man, and of valour by woman, are the things on which the chief lights are thrown. A group, of which a young woman

* The exquisite prettiness of this lady is only to be seen in the first state of the plate. No admirer of Hogarth can be content without possessing all the variations of his engravings, and to an artist the alterations he made in retouching them are full of instruction.

is the principal, are gazing in wonderment at the prize-fighter, who is just entering the scene with his bald head uncovered to show the many wounds his skull has sustained. The simple but enthusiastic admiration expressed in the face of the country girl for this grim fellow baffles all attempt at description. The same face in the print, though engraved by Hogarth himself, conveys but a faint notion of that in the picture.

This girl and the fascinating drummeress, are among the instances noticed by Coleridge in Hogarth, of whom he says, "the satirist never extinguishes that love of beauty which belonged to him as a poet, and who often introduces a beautiful female as the central figure in a crowd of humorous deformities; which figure, such is the power of true genius, neither acts nor is meant to act as a contrast; but diffuses through all, and over each of the group, a spirit of reconciliation and human kindness; and even when the attention is no longer consciously directed to the cause of this feeling, still blends its tenderness with our laughter; and thus prevents the instructive merriment of the whims of Nature from degenerating into the heart-poison of contempt or hatred."

Hogarth was a painter of Nature, in the highest sense, as distinguished from a painter of matter-of-fact; and that he did not aim at mere *literal* truth is shown by many little circumstances in his pictures,—among which may be mentioned the lightning pointed with an arrow-head in the fourth print of the "Rake's Progress." The barb is directed against a noted gaming-house in St. James's Street, and the expedient

is adopted to attract attention to its direction. Indeed, close literal representations of many of his scenes would be utterly intolerable; and, therefore, as Fielding, an author with whom he had much in common, redeemed so coarse a subject as the history of a highwayman by a peculiar treatment far from literal, and by making it a vehicle of general satire,—so Hogarth has dealt with the scenes of vice he exhibits, in which the mind is perpetually carried away from what is presented to the eye by general allusion, by wit, and by humour. This will be at once understood if we compare the spirit in which the election pictures are conceived with the treatment of a subject by Bird in the same collection—the Museum of Sir John Soane. Bird's picture is a small one representing a quarrel in an alehouse. It is a picture of great merit (for Bird was considered a formidable rival to Wilkie), extremely natural—indeed, painted to the life; but it does not rise even *near* to Hogarth's art. It is an exhibition of humanity in its most repulsive form, with no redeeming touch of good; and as it suggests nothing beyond the mere subject, we are glad to escape from it, and much the more for its literalness, —while the "Election Entertainment," though there is violence and even death in it, detains us willingly. In this picture the mayor, who is at the head of the table, dies of repletion while still holding in his hand a fork on which an oyster is impaled. In the same spirit Fielding, in describing the death of Jonathan Wild, instead of sickening the reader by graphic details of an execution, dismisses his hero with a

corkscrew in his hand, which he tells us Jonathan "*carried out of the world with him*," having contrived, notwithstanding his arms were pinioned, to pick it from the pocket of the Ordinary. In the picture of which I am speaking—one of the richest of all Hogarth's works—a clown in the foreground has got his head broken for carrying a flag on which is written, "Give us our eleven days,"—in allusion to the alteration of the style by Parliament, and by which the people were led to suppose they were cheated out of eleven days; an admirable satire on the power possessed by demagogues over the populace.

The second picture of the "Election" series is a charming composition. Hogarth has chosen the most genial season of the year. The landlady of a country inn is sitting at a door overshadowed by a grape vine. In a balcony above, two ladies are enjoying the fresh air, and on the opposite side of the picture a cobbler and a barber are discussing the siege of Portobello, while taking a social pot and pipe together. The whole scene is fraught with the elements of comfort and peaceful enjoyment. But the demon of party has entered it. Bribery is going on in the foreground, and riot verging on rebellion in the middle distance, where a mob is attacking a rival inn, and pulling down the sign of the Crown. Nothing can be finer than the contrasts in this picture. Immediately from the group of rioters the eye falls on a peaceful farm-house, with the blue smoke of its chimney curling up among the trees that embosom it, and just beyond is the quiet and happy-looking village that

has sent out its excited inhabitants to the scene of outrage.

Tragedy and comedy are united by Hogarth with the same truth to Nature, and the same relief of each other by contrast, with which they are united by Shakespear. Thus, in the prison scene in the "Rake's Progress," where the foreground groups present nothing but misery, and the infuriated wife of the spendthrift is in the act of striking her wretched husband, while the poor woman whom in early life he had ruined, and who has followed him to prison, is in a fit, — an open space between these groups shows us the figure of an alchemist, tranquilly engaged with his furnace and crucibles, whose deep and quiet abstraction is of the highest value in the way of relief, and so likewise is the introduction of the poor author, who is helping to recover the fainting woman, while his scheme for paying the debts of the nation drops from his hand. I need not point out the admirable and exquisitely humorous contrasts of physiognomy throughout his pictures, a principle that escaped the Dutch painters with the exception of Jan Steen.

In the treatment of accessories, Hogarth stands alone. How much of meaning and of humour is there in the display of the articles purchased at auction by Lady Squanderfield from the collection of Sir Timothy Babyhouse, and with which her negro page is amusing himself! * The collection of hats, also, on the floor in the second plate to the "Analysis of Beauty," how

* Walpole, who, though he relished Hogarth's wit, was not altogether satisfied with him, does not notice these.

comical and how full of character it is! We fancy a face to every hat.

The ingenuity with which he often makes the most apparently trifling objects in his pictures tell a story or suggest a moral, and frequently in the obscurest corners of his compositions, is equally without a parallel. Indeed, after we have made ourselves acquainted with all his leading incidents, there is scarcely one of his pictures in which, if we search diligently, we shall not find latent touches of the highest relish, —small objects serving a double and sometimes a treble purpose. In the marriage scene in the "Rake's Progress," in which the hero, having dissipated his patrimony, appears at the altar with an ancient heiress, we are shown the interior of Old Marylebone Church, at that time standing in an out-of-the-way part of the suburbs, and, therefore, resorted to for stolen marriages, or marriages of which either of the parties had any reason to be ashamed. The church, a very small one, is in a neglected condition, and cracks in the walls, mildew and sobwebs, would occur to an ordinary painter; but Hogarth has shown a fracture running through the table of the Commandments,—the Creed is defaced by damp, and he has placed a cobweb over the opening in the charity box. Again, an empty phial labelled "laudanum" lies at the feet of the expiring viscountess in the last scene of the "Marriage à-la-Mode;" but this was not enough, he has placed close to it the "last dying speech of Counsellor Silver-Tongue," suggesting that it was the death of her

lover and not of her husband that caused her to swallow poison.

His ingenuity is endless in the expression of whatever he wishes to convey. In the din of street noises, which his enraged musician tries, in vain, to shut out of his ears, he unites the sounds of a dustman's bell, a ballad singer, a hautboy-player, a knife-grinder, a paviour, &c. Not far off is the sign of a pewterer, and then, in the distance, he shows us that the church bells are ringing, by the flag that waves from the steeple.

There is no surer test of a painter's feeling for Nature than the manner in which he represents childhood. In Hogarth we often find the same charm, arising from its want of sympathy with grown-up life, that I have noticed in the works of Raphael. The Boy Mourner, in the picture of the "Harlot's Funeral," winding up his top, "the only person in that assembly," as Lamb remarks, "that is not a hypocrite," is an instance of this, and so is the same boy in the preceding picture, the dying scene. The pretty little girl in the "Election Entertainment," who is examining the ring on the fine gentleman's finger, and the two little urchins creeping slowly to school, through Covent Garden Market, their very short footsteps marked in the snow, in his picture of "Morning," are also exquisite specimens of childhood.

There is a charming picture by Hogarth at Holland House, in which children are the principal personages. It represents the private performance of a play at the

house of Mr. Conduit, the Master of the Mint, before the Duke of Cumberland and a few other people of rank and fashion. Three girls and a boy are on the stage, and seem to be very seriously doing their best; but the attitude and expression of one little girl, on a front seat among the audience, is matchless. She is so entirely absorbed in the performance, that she sits bolt upright, and will sit, we are sure, immovably, to the end of the play, enjoying it as a child only can, and much the more because the actors are children.—The picture is beautifully coloured, and is one of those early works painted from Nature the execution of which prepared the way to Hogarth's greater efforts.

Connected with his love of children, may be noticed the interest he took in the establishment of the Foundling Hospital, to the funds of which he contributed, by giving three pictures, which, with the works of other artists, formed the first public exhibition in London. His fine portrait of Captain Coram was one of these; but his choice of the "March to Finchley," a satire on the vices of the army, as a subject for a hospital of foundlings, was a touch of humorous satire.

So difficult is it, and in many cases so impossible, for a painter to explain his entire meaning on canvass, that it is to be regretted Hogarth did not leave a written key to his stories, in which, in a very few words, he might have guarded against all doubt as to the more important passages in them, that are involved in obscurity; which, after all, are very much fewer than might have been expected in narratives so rich in incident. The third picture of the series of the

"Marriage à-la-Mode" is the one which has, more than any other of his works, puzzled his commentators. For my own part, I cannot but think that it has a deeper meaning than has generally been supposed. I believe the expression of the elder female to be that of jealousy. On no other ground can her furiously-vindictive look be accounted for. The indignation of the viscount is directed against the quack only, for he would not lift his cane to a woman. She is still in the prime of life, and with a face which, though now distorted with passion, we may imagine, in a calmer mood, to be handsome. The clasp knife, which she holds out of sight, is intended for her rival, and Hogarth, as I think, meant to show how vices that the world considers as comparatively venial often lead to the blackest crimes.

Hazlitt has certainly mistaken the painter's meaning in the young girl, the object, as I believe, of this woman's rage. He says — "Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person and the hardened indifference of her character." The truth is, she is a child, not hardened by vice, for she is too young, but the victim to a refinement in infamy imported from France, and of which the then reigning sovereign set the example. There can be little doubt but the quack, who is a Frenchman, is the pimp in this case, and viewing the subject in this light, the story seems to me to be quite clear. Hogarth saw with honest indignation how much more readily the fashionable world of England has always adopted the corruption of the Continental

countries rather than their refinements or their virtues, —and he never lost an opportunity of exposing this base species of imitation.

I fancy I see much more in this poor child than "docility to vice." The finery with which she has been loaded, like a victim for sacrifice, is evidently that of some elder predecessor, for the dress she wears is much too long for her. This child, and that of the viscountess herself, in the last picture, are alike, though in different ways,—intended to show the irreparable evils so often inflicted on the innocent by the thoughtlessness of the vicious. The iron on the leg of the little girl in the last picture tells a sad tale of inherited infirmity and neglect.

And yet Hogarth, who painted these things, has been charged with prostituting his Art at the suggestion of a vicious patron, though it has been added that he afterwards repented having done so. The latter assertion cannot, however, be true, for he not only published engravings of the only two of his pictures considered objectionable,—but when the plates were worn he retouched them, and continued to sell the impressions to the end of his life.

That Hogarth, the uncompromising satirist of the vices of all classes, who lashed the old masters for appealing to the passions in subjects taken from the scandalous chronicle of Olympus, — that Hogarth, manly and thoroughly English as was his nature, should thus desecrate his Art, would involve a degree of inconsistency, from the charge of which I should be glad to relieve his memory; and I think this may

be done, though I am aware that in attempting it I am venturing on hazardous ground.

The pictures in question tell a tale, as I think, of seduction and desertion, in a manner far more calculated to excite compassion for the victim, and detestation for her betrayer, than any feeling of levity, and, indeed, with much less of grossness, as the commentators on them acknowledge, than may be found in many of his other works against the tendency of which no objection has ever been made. If his mode of treating these subjects, his mode, indeed, of treating all, is one which would not be tolerated in the present state of taste, I can only say that the taste of the present age tolerates very much in Art that is, in reality, far more objectionable. He shows us, in these pictures, that the mind of a young woman religiously brought up has been corrupted, previous to her ruin, by licentious books that have, no doubt, been furnished to her for that purpose; for in her table-drawer a Prayer-book and "The Practice of Piety" are mixed with books of an immoral tendency. In the first picture the falling looking-glass is very significant; its surface is bright and without a flaw,—in the second it lies on the ground in fragments. Here she is in tears, and evidently imploring that she may not be deserted,—while it is as evident from the countenance of her seducer that she has little to hope from his honour—he thinks of nothing but himself. There are touches of humour in these as in all Hogarth's works; but the impression they make is a very sad one, and I have not a doubt they were painted as well with the

intention of warning the innocent against danger, as of awakening remorse in the guilty.

The failure of Hogarth in subjects from Sacred History has been sufficiently dwelt on; yet it must be remarked (and fully admitting his failure) that even in these he has touches which distinguish them from the productions of commonplace minds. In the "Pool of Bethesda," a rich woman is waiting to be healed, while her servant drives a poor one away; and in the "Moses before Pharaoh's Daughter," the child clings to his mother's girdle, who is about to be discharged after having performed the office of his nurse. She is receiving her wages, which the treasurer disburses somewhat unwillingly, while the mother thinks much less of the money than of parting with her child; and her tears show how unfounded are the insinuations which a black slave, who stands behind the princess, is whispering against his mistress into the ears of an astonished attendant. If such a treatment be considered as below the dignity of serious history, it must, at any rate, be admitted to be in strict conformity with Nature.

Hogarth, it is true, is often gross; but it must be remembered that he painted in a less fastidious age than ours, and that his great object was to expose vice. Debauchery is always made by him detestable, never attractive. He is not, it must be owned, a ladies' painter,—for ladies, fortunately for themselves, know nothing of the life which he chiefly satirised. But it is no sign of a healthy masculine taste to object to what Lamb denominates his "strong meat for men."

It must seem, to those who are not intimately acquainted with the history of British Art, almost incredible that he could scarcely sell his matchless pictures at the lowest prices, and that his first eulogist among people of fashion, Horace Walpole, denied his merit as a painter. Walpole begins his account by speaking of Hogarth as one whom he chose to consider "rather as a writer of comedy with the pencil than as a painter," and throughout his essay he continues invariably to call him "this *author*." A Rev. Mr. Gilpin, also writing near the time of Hogarth, represents him as ignorant of composition. I doubt, indeed, whether his entire excellence was fully felt by the public until his works were collected in 1814, and exhibited at the Gallery of the British Institution.

It was then seen how great a master he was in all respects. How completely he bent the Art to his will; and, though alive to all the beauties of Painting, and rarely neglecting them, yet how steadily he kept in view the true end of Art—in no case ever permitting a minor excellence in any way to interfere with his story or expression. The purity of his colour was then acknowledged, as well as that zest of execution which tells us that painting was far more a pleasure than a labour to him. It is only in the later pictures of Jan Steen that I have seen faces so full of life and expression, and yet so slightly touched as are many of Hogarth's.—The execution of his "Rake's Progress," for instance, would be in many parts unsatisfactory, were it not for the completeness with which his meaning is always expressed. As an instance of what he could do

by the fewest possible touches, I would mention the brawny arm of the woman in the first picture of the "Rake's Progress," who refuses the handful of money offered to her daughter.

But it is time to speak of other eminent men of our school.

With no artist of powers as great as those of Fuseli were those powers confined within so narrow a circle; but within that circle he has expressed the terror and the evanescence of the world of phantoms, with a power unequalled by any painter that ever lived. Perhaps the finest of all his works is the "Sin and Death;" and in this he has done that which, had he not done it, we might have thought impossible—he has embodied Milton's words:—

> "What seemed his head the likeness of a kingly crown had on."

In the "Satan" of Sir Thomas Lawrence (the worst portrait he ever painted), all is so material as to be wholly unnatural with reference to the subject. The body and limbs of the fiend are as solid as the shaft of the spear he holds; and the helmet, sword, and shield seem borrowed from the property-room of a theatre. In the "Sin and Death" of Fuseli there are a ponderous key (the key of the gates of Hell) and a chain. But they are forged by no earthly smith, and are not otherwise thought of by the spectator than as parts of a terrible vision.

If what I have said of his Art may be thought to contradict my urging the necessity of the study of Nature

to the imaginative painter, I would remark that he was profoundly acquainted with all in Nature that could help his conceptions of the visionary. He was a perfect master of chiaroscuro and of the evanescence of colour, and he possessed such a competent knowledge of the anatomical structure of the human figure, as to be able to give ideal probability to attitudes in which it was impossible he could be helped by living models. Hence, he could also give to his ghosts that general and uncertain look that belongs to shadowy beings, without the omission of the leading characteristics of form; and his breadth, to borrow an expression of his own, is never "emptiness." Fuseli, therefore, was as much indebted to the knowledge of Nature for his power in the visionary as to his imagination;—and it was in a great measure the want of such knowledge that rendered the art of Blake abortive. Everybody can laugh at the extravagances that so often disfigure the works of Fuseli. But it would require eloquence equal to his own to do justice to his finest things, and in spite of his great faults, I cannot but look on him as a great genius, a genius of whom the age in which he lived was unworthy.

A striking peculiarity of the British School, in its most palmy days, is the remarkable diversity of powers into which it branched. When we turn from Fuseli to Stothard, it is difficult to believe that Art so contrasted as theirs should have been contemporaneous. In nothing were these two extraordinary men alike save in being extraordinary. Far more apart than Michael Angelo and Raphael, the difference was

increased rather by the distance of Fuseli from Michael Angelo, than by that between Stothard and Raphael.

For more than half a century Stothard was engaged in illustrating not only the contemporary literature of his country, but the works of her best poets, from the time of Chaucer to his own; his employers, with the exception occasionally of the goldsmiths, being the booksellers. By these he was engaged in every species of composition, from illustrations of Homer and Shakespear, to designs for spelling-books and pocket almanacks, fashions for the *Ladies' Magazine*, portraits of popular actors and actresses, in character, as well as other subjects of the day, such as "Balls at St. James's," "The Employments of the Royal Family"—"The King going out with the Fox Hounds," &c., and numbers of his early designs are from novels and poems, the very names of which are now only preserved in his beautiful Art. By the goldsmiths he was employed in designing ornaments for plate, from the Wellington Shield to spoon-handles for George IV.

The species of his employment formed his style, which, resulting from the haste required by tradesmen, appeared slight and unsubstantial by the side of the pictures of artists who were enabled to give more time to their productions. His practice, also, limited the size of his works; and with people, therefore, who judge of pictures, in any degree, by the space they occupy on the walls of galleries or the quantity of minute detail within that space, Stothard will rank as a painter of minor importance; while all who estimate Art by the

soul that lives in it, will place him with the very few painters who have possessed imaginations of the highest order, and have yet restrained themselves from overstepping "the modesty of Nature."

It must, however, be acknowledged, that it is in his smallest pictures and drawings only that we feel there is nothing more to be desired;—when he repeated his subjects on a larger scale, which he sometimes did for the Exhibition, they have in general too much the character of magnified sketches. This may have made him say, near the close of his life, "I feel that I have not done what I might have done." Yet, perhaps, this is the feeling at last of every painter.

It is scarcely possible but that among the thousands of Stothard's productions repetitions of himself should not occur; nor that he should not occasionally have adopted ideas suggested by the Antique or by the old masters. He not seldom reminds us of Raphael, often of Rubens, and often of Watteau;—but he does so as one worthy to rank with them, and as they remind us of their predecessors. Yet his works will bear the deduction of every such instance of imitation, and of every repetition of himself, and we shall be surprised to see how much of the most beautiful original imagery will remain. His designs for the "Novelist's Library" remind us of no other painter. In these, all is direct from Nature,—and as many of the novels in this collection were not very far in date from his own time, he gave the dresses of his day and the style of furniture.

These charming works gained him first the admira-

tion, and then the friendship of Flaxman; for, on seeing one of them in a shop-window, the great sculptor determined to make the acquaintance of an artist with whose taste his own was so nearly allied. In Stothard's illustrations of "The Pilgrim's Progress," sixteen in number, there are images of holiness, of purity, and of childlike innocence, worthy of that beautiful poem, and they are as graceful to the eye as to the mind, the Art entirely aiding the sentiment. The one from among them which I should select as peculiarly an effusion of his own mind, for I can see in it no resemblance to any other painter, is that in which Christian is received by Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity into the Palace Beautiful. Another series of his designs, and which, though quite distinct from these, is evidently one in which he took great delight, is from "Robinson Crusoe;" and in looking at some of these, one is almost more impressed with the solitude of the shipwrecked man than in reading the book.

This is peculiarly the case in the plate in which Crusoe wanders listlessly through a wood with a gun on each shoulder, and attended by his dog; while, from among those, from that part of the story in which he is no longer solitary, I should select, as the finest in expression, the conversation between him and the young Roman Catholic priest, in which the latter impresses on him the importance of religious instruction to his little colony.

It was remarked by Stothard that there was nothing more difficult than to paint people doing nothing. In his picture of a procession of the girls of the Masonic

Charity School,* he has encountered this difficulty, and when it is considered that he was obliged to make portraits, and, therefore, show the faces of all the nearest figures, he has overcome it with wonderful skill; and it was the straightforward simplicity and unaffectedness of his nature that led him to this triumph; and enabled him to make it one of the most original and interesting pictures ever painted. It may be said he has merely painted the facts of the subject; and it is his greatest praise that he has done this, for a less natural painter would have spoilt it by embellishment.

Stothard's humour is as true and as delicate as that of Addison. His illustrations of the "Spectator" are therefore perfect; but the picture in which he has displayed the most of discrimination of character is his "Canterbury Pilgrims." The personages of Chaucer all seem to pass before our eyes as if they were shown to us by a painter contemporary with the poet. If one has less of the real character than the rest, it is perhaps the "Wife of Bath." She seems too young and too graceful for the merry dame who had buried five husbands. Yet he has well contrived to make it evident that her talk and laugh are loud, by their attracting the attention of those who are riding before and behind her, as well as of the persons closest to her.

His constant friend, the venerable author of the "Pleasures of Memory," possesses many of the finest of

* In the possession of Miss Burdett Coutts. There is an indifferent engraving of it by Bartolozzi, from which the picture cannot be judged.

his works, and delights in pointing out the refinements of expression with which they abound. Among them is a vignette drawing of the Turk who, in the Arabian story, sees his turban, the folds of which contain his money, carried away by a kite. The bewildered Mussulman claps his hand on his bald head, as if the evidence of one sense were not sufficient to assure him of his loss. In a design, the subject of which is Gil Blas attending his master, the Canon, at dinner, Mr. Rogers noticed to me that the old epicure while putting a spoonful of soup into his mouth, is devouring with his eyes a dish which Gil Blas is about to place on the table.

Like Hogarth, Stothard rarely had recourse to the model in Painting. The minds of both were so completely filled with a store of imagery collected immediately from Nature, and so vividly was this store preserved, that they could at will select and embody on canvass whatever was most appropriate to the subject in hand. The operation of Painting is always an exercise of memory,—for even with a model in the room, the transfer of what the painter sees is but a recollection, and the difference between those who can only paint with models at hand, and those who, like Hogarth and Stothard, and many, no doubt, among the old masters (of whom Michael Angelo must certainly have been one) can draw on the stores of their minds for their models,—the difference between such is only that the latter class have the power of retaining images longer in their memories than others—a power no doubt in a great degree to be acquired. Hogarth tells us that he set himself to acquire it,—and he certainly did so to an

extraordinary extent. He belonged to a very different class of painters from those who sit at home and consult engravings, or their copies of pictures, for precedents. His habits seem to have been anything but sedentary,—and I know that Stothard's were not. When not engaged at his easel, his time was almost always spent in long walks through the streets and suburbs of London. In the summer he was fond of country excursions, and for one entire summer, as I have heard him say, he and one or two companions lived in a tent, on the banks of the Medway,* where they hired a boat and spent days in sailing.

While speaking of the English School I must not omit to notice a truly original genius, who though not a painter, was an artist of the highest order in his way—Thomas Bewick, the admirable designer and engraver on wood. His works, indeed, are of the smallest dimensions, but this makes it only the more surprising that so much of interest could be comprised within such little spaces. The woodcuts that illustrate his books of natural history may be studied with advantage by the most ambitious votary of the highest classes of Art—filled as they are with the truest feeling for Nature, and though often representing the most ordinary objects, yet never, in a single instance, degenerating into commonplace. The charming vignettes that ornament these books abound in incidents from real life, diversified by genuine humour, as well as by the truest pathos,—of which the single figure of a

* In Mr. Bray's "Life of Stothard," there is an engraving of this tent from a drawing by Stothard.

shipwrecked sailor saying his prayers on a rock, with the waves rising around him, is an instance.

There is often in these little things a deep meaning that places his art on a level with styles which the world is apt to consider as greatly above it, in proof of which I would mention the party of boys playing at soldiers among graves, and mounted on a row of upright tombstones for horses; while for quaint humour, extracted from a very simple source, may be noticed a procession of geese which have just waddled through a stream, while their line of march is continued by a row of stepping-stones.

The student of Landscape can never consult the works of Bewick without improvement. The backgrounds to the figures of his quadrupeds and his birds, and his vignettes, have a charm of Nature quite his own. He gives us, in these, every season of the year, and his trees, whether in the clothing of summer, or in the nakedness of winter, are the trees of an artist bred in the country. He is equally true in his little home scenes, his farm-yards and cottages, as in his wild coast scenery with flocks of sea-birds wheeling round the rocks. In one of these subjects there stands a ruined church towards which the sea has encroached, the rising tide threatening to submerge a tombstone raised "to perpetuate the memory," &c.

Bewick resembles Hogarth in this, that his illustrations of the stories of others are not to be compared with his own inventions. His feeling for the beauties of Nature as they were impressed on him directly, and not at secondhand, is akin to the feeling of Burns,

and his own designs remind me, therefore, much more of Burns than the few which he made from the Poet.

In another place I have spoken of the "Death of Rizzio" as Opie's greatest work. If in this singularly fine picture the painter has not paid that attention to exactness of costume that would have been given to such a subject in the present antiquarian age, nothing can surpass the life and energy with which he has brought the dreadful scene before us. We hear the wretched victim, through whose silken coat his back seems to writhe and tremble, cry for mercy above the shouts of his murderers, and the rattle of their armour, while the small white hand of the queen is extended, among their brawny arms and flashing swords, in a vain effort to stay them. The suddenness of the action is aided by fierce and abrupt gleams of light and tremendous depth of shadow; and the grandeur of the colour, and the breadth and truth of the whole picture, even had it no other merit, would worthily place it with the finest works of Tintoret.

Sir George Beaumont, who had possessed himself of Hogarth's mahl stick, determined to keep it till a painter should appear worthy to receive it; and he kept it till he saw "The Village Politicians" of Wilkie. Sir George, who had been insensible to the extent and variety of Stothard's powers, hailed with great delight the far more matter-of-fact style of the young Scot.

Inferior as a colourist to Hogarth, and with infinitely less of imagination, Wilkie was still a truly great painter.

No better example can be pointed out to the student than that of the industry, the patience, and the devotion to Art recorded in the history of his studies;—how he moved on, as his biographer says, "like the sunbeam on the wall, *slowly and brightly*." The change in his style, from the delicate finish of his small works to the more general treatment of subjects on a large scale, was lamented by his admirers. It was a change, however, he was obliged to make because his health no longer permitted that attention to minute detail which he had carried so very far. But the public is a hard taskmaster, and particularly to its favourites,—and it did not willingly forgive the alteration. Yet in the latter years of his life he produced some very great works, works which could they have been exhibited with a new name might perhaps have been more justly treated than they were by the critics of the day;—such as the "Preaching of John Knox," the "Columbus," and the "Interview between Pius the Seventh and Napoleon." The masterly sketches made in those countries from which he was not destined to return, show how actively (too actively indeed) his fine mind had been engaged to the very last. Among them I remember one of the most fascinating representations of childhood I ever beheld,—the young daughter of Admiral Walker in an Eastern dress. It was as beautiful as anything of Reynolds or Gainsborough, and yet quite unlike either.

I believe all opinions will concur in placing Wilkie's subjects from familiar and rustic life, with few exceptions, highest among his works. Such were the pic-

tures that first made his reputation,—"The Village Politicians," "The Blind Fiddler," "The Rent Day," "Duncan Grey," &c.—Of this class, however, the most elaborately painted and the fullest in subject, "The Village Festival," in the National Gallery, is certainly not the one to which I should give the preference. For though that exquisite delicacy of touch which marks more or less every period of his art is here seen in the greatest perfection, yet the picture seems to me, in all respects, the most artificial of his earlier productions. That it gave him great trouble, is evident from the account of its progress, in his diary.

Among his scenes from domestic life, the two finest appear to me to be "The Penny Wedding" and the "Distraining for Rent," subjects displaying the most varied powers. "The Penny Wedding" is equal to the "Hallow-e'en" of Burns, or the inimitable description of rustic life in the "Twa Dogs." The joyousness and activity with which the reel is going on to the music of Neil Gow,—the simple feasting in the background where the grace is not forgotten,—and the satisfaction with which the Howdie, an important personage on such occasions, and the village doctor regard the scene, are matchless, and in a manner as far above all commonplace or vulgarity as it is free from anything of over-refinement. Wilkie in such subjects seems as if he were guided by the precept of Polonius—"Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar." But in truth he was guided by his own gentility of nature.

We feel in looking at this picture, as we feel in reading the poems of Burns to which I have compared it,—that such scenes can only be described by a painter or a poet born and bred north of the Tweed. This is a merit, and a sterling one it is, of Wilkie's two subjects from Allan Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd;" and which, notwithstanding a want of beauty in the female figures, make us regret that he had not painted more from the poetry of Scotland. An artist is always the better for being national.

The picture which I believe would be selected by painters from among all his works as the most perfect specimen of his art, is that of the "Whiskey Still," painted for Sir Willoughby Gordon. It is an extremely simple composition, containing but three figures. An old Highlander is holding up a glass of whiskey to the light, and seems to be smacking his lips with the relish of a perfect connoisseur, while a boy is pouring some of the spirit into a jug, and a man in the background is looking toward the Highlander. Not only in character, but in the entire treatment, in colour and execution, this masterly work leaves nothing to be desired.

With much less truth of colour, his "Distraining for Rent" displays dramatic powers of the very highest order. Of a picture so well known by Raimbach's fine engraving, I need say little; and, indeed, I know not how to say anything of its pathos that would not fall very far short of its impression. But I cannot help noticing the admirable manner in which Wilkie

has introduced one of the subordinate figures, the man employed in writing an inventory of the furniture. The consciousness of being a thoroughly unwelcome visitor is shown in every circumstance connected with this figure. He seems desirous of occupying the smallest possible space. He has seated himself on the corner of the bedstead, and deposited his hat between that and his feet. He writes on a book held on his knees, and from an inkstand held in his hand, not venturing to ask for any more convenient mode of proceeding with what he has to do. The sheriff's officer is equally good. He withstands the storms of threats and reproaches with which he is assailed by the relations of the distressed family, and though he grasps his cudgel firmly, he keeps it somewhat out of sight and depends more on the writ he holds in his other hand for protection. How true to Nature is the dog, too, that has taken refuge under his master's chair, and looks out from between his legs with great dissatisfaction towards the strangers whom he dares not attack. And then the two women—neighbours, near the door; the one silent and affected by the scene, the other a gossip who has left her own affairs to see what is going on elsewhere. She has the key of her house in her hand.

The picture Wilkie painted for the Duke of Wellington, for skill in composition and delicate completion of detail, is one of his prominent works; and though the subject afforded far less scope than many of his others for dramatic power, there is not in the

Art a finer touch of expression than that of the anxious face of the woman overlooking the old pensioner who reads to his companions the first news of the Battle of Waterloo. The contrast of this single face to all the others that surround the reader is, indeed, a master-stroke.

When the condition of Wilkie's health no longer allowed him to continue the elaborate finish that he had carried so far, and he adopted a more generalized mode of execution, the change was lamented, and it became the fashion to compare his latest works disadvantageously, and often unjustly, with those before he made this change. But many great things were the fruit of his later years. The contest between Napoleon and Pius VII. is a noble historical picture. The two unyielding men are admirably contrasted, and the disappointment of the Emperor at finding an obstacle to his wishes, in the mind of the Pope, which seldom was an obstacle in his own mind to anything he wished, namely, conscience,—as well as the determination of his character, is expressed not only in his face, but in his figure from head to foot. It has been objected that he would not have worn his hat in the presence of the Pope. But instances are on record of disrespect shown by him to crowned heads, that fully justify Wilkie in placing the hat where it is.

Among the great painters of whom I have been speaking, it may be noticed that Stothard and Wilkie were both students, and very assiduous students, of the Royal Academy. Flaxman, Chantrey, Turner, Constable, Jackson, Haydon, and Etty, also learned all that

an Academy could teach them within the walls of Somerset House.

I mention these facts, because Academies are sometimes compared to Colleges, and the inference is, that as Colleges can do little towards producing Poets, Academies can do little towards producing Painters. It should be remembered, however, that Poetry makes use of the language that is common to all, and though the refinements of that language may not be acquired without books, yet books are not confined to Colleges. The Painter, the Sculptor, and the Architect, on the other hand, have to acquire the mastery of a language of their own, involving many studies and much mechanical practice. These can only be acquired in a school, and under the guidance of experienced teachers; and though Academies can neither create genius nor supply patronage, the two conditions necessary to the existence of Art, they may materially assist both.

I believe it will be found generally, that what is called *Academic Art* (by way of disparagement), in other words *learned mediocrity*, has preceded their formation; and that when original genius has afterwards appeared, it has always been benefited by them. Lebrun, with all his talents, was, in the ordinary sense of the words, an *academic artist*, and he was so before the establishment of the French Academy. Some time after that institution had been in operation, Watteau appeared; not that he was formed by the Academy, for he was formed by the study of Nature and the art of Rubens—but the Academy did not

hinder his appearance, nor destroy him after he became one of its members.

But I will go further back. Neither Raphael nor Michael Angelo were able to transmit the essence of their art to their pupils. The art of Raphael died with him, and if it has in any degree revived, it has done so in our own Academy, in Flaxman and in Stothard. Michael Angelo, with all the pains he took, was unable to make an historical painter of Sebastian del Piombo, whose genius could not rise above dignified portrait; and Vasari, also the scholar and enthusiastic admirer of Michael Angelo, became but the founder of a school of Machinists.

The obligations of Hogarth and of Reynolds to Academies have been denied. Hogarth, indeed, did not acquire his Imagination, his inexhaustible fertility of Invention, his humour or his pathos in an Academy; but he acquired his knowledge of the human figure (without which all these great qualities must have remained unknown to the world) in the subscription Academy opened by Sir James Thornhill. It is very true that Reynolds had not studied in an Academy. But it was a cause to him of lamentation, not of boasting. Hear his own modest words—"Not having the advantage of an early academical education," he says, "I never had the facility of drawing the naked figure which an artist ought to have." After this we may fairly say, when we are told of eminent artists who have not studied in Academies, that it would have been better for them if they had done so.

It has been said by a modern opponent of all such

Institutions, that "to produce other Raphaels they must go through the same process that Raphael himself went through."—This, I believe; but I believe also that the process must be gone through with powers of mind and delicacy of taste equal to Raphael's;—and then I doubt not that the success may be as complete in a modern Academy as it was in the school of Perugino.*

* It should be known to the public that all the charges in the autobiography of Mr. Haydon, unfavourable to the Royal Academy, are unfounded. The council never made a law, as there stated, after the students had presented a testimonial to Fuseli, that they should not again pay such a compliment to an officer. Many years afterwards the students gave a silver vase to Mr. Hilton, when keeper, and the same tribute of respect was payed to his successor, Mr. Jones. It is also untrue, that the election of Sir Martin Shee to the presidential chair was hurried through, without the usual forms, in the fear that a command might be received from the King to elect Wilkie. It was perfectly well known that George IV. would have been pleased had the choice fallen upon Wilkie, and equally known that the King would never interfere with any election of that body, unless he thought it right to exercise the privilege of a veto.

Haydon's quarrel with the Academy originated in the belief that a clique of portrait-painters, in the body, tried to crush him by placing his "Dentatus" in a bad situation. The truth, however, was quite the reverse. The picture was hung in the anti-room, in an excellent light, because it was considered that a good place in that room was better than an indifferent one in the great room. It was hung where pictures by Sir Joshua Reynolds had been placed year after year,—where one of the finest of Lawrence's portraits, the whole-length of Master Lambton, was afterwards placed,—and where I remember hanging a picture by Sir Martin Shee, when he was president, while there were fine pictures by Mr. Roberts and Mr. Herbert (not then members) in the same room, but on which account those gentlemen never thought of quarrelling with the Academy.

SECTION XI.

ON COMPOSITION.

I SHALL here confine myself to the consideration of composition, as it relates to lines and forms only.

Nature, everywhere, arranges her productions in clusters;—and to this end she employs a variety of means. The heavenly bodies are grouped by attraction, flowers and trees by the natural means by which they are propagated, while the social instincts congregate man and most other animals into societies,—and the same instincts impel, in man, as well as in many of the inferior creatures, the grouping of their habitations. Grouping is therefore a universal law of nature; and though there are cases in which a scattered display of objects may, in parts of a composition, greatly aid, by contrast, the more compact portions, and cases in which scattered objects may help to tell the story, yet in the composition of a picture, taking the whole together, a scattered general effect is always a fault.

In observing crowds we notice many repetitions of similar attitudes; and in herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, &c., we remark this also. Repetitions of forms and shapes are likewise of frequent occurrence in trees, flowers, the outlines of mountains, clouds, &c. Now,

the picturesque styles of composition, as they are called, avoid the imitation of these appearances, as too formal for Art; but this, like every other rejection of a natural principle, only produces mannerism,—which sort of mannerism was carried to its greatest extreme by the French painters of the time of Louis XV., painters who are now all but forgotten.

It is true the repetitions of forms and lines, if managed with too much regularity or appearance of study, become pedantic; but in the compositions of Masaccio, of Raphael, and of Poussin, these repetitions have the accidental look of Nature,—and in the works of the best landscape painters, and particularly of the Dutch and Flemish Schools, we see the repetitions of forms given with the same unaffected truth. It is such modes of treatment in which the true *artlessness of Art*, if I may use the expression, consists;—artlessness which is indeed the *perfection* of Art, and the furthest possible removed from that artlessness which arises from ignorance, the artlessness of very early Art, and of the designs of clever children.

All improvements in composition, from the infancy of Painting to its full maturity, are the result of the gradual discovery of the principles by which Nature makes assemblages of objects agreeable to the eye,—sometimes by giving variety to regular forms or groups, sometimes by giving regularity to forms in themselves irregular, and always by giving unity to multitude, and subordination of many objects to one, or to a few; and in all that relates to forms or to lines it is chiefly perspective that does these things.—Linear perspective is,



NOAH AND HIS FAMILY—a fresco by BENOZZO GOZZOLI



THE MISFORTUNES OF JOB—a fresco by FRANCESCO DA VOLTERRA

therefore, the basis of linear grouping, and until its laws were well understood, composition remained imperfect, whatever beauties it occasionally put forth being accidentally obtained by the lucky chance of the correct copying of the appearances of Nature, but with no certainty of repetition, the causes of the appearances not being understood.

Of composition, therefore, before the laws of perspective were known, it is more to be wondered at that we often find it as agreeable as it is than that we do not find it better. In the works of Giotto we see beautiful combinations of lines and forms, though these excellences are rarely sustained through an entire picture; but when a knowledge of perspective had settled the true principles of grouping with reference to background, we find extended composition well developed.

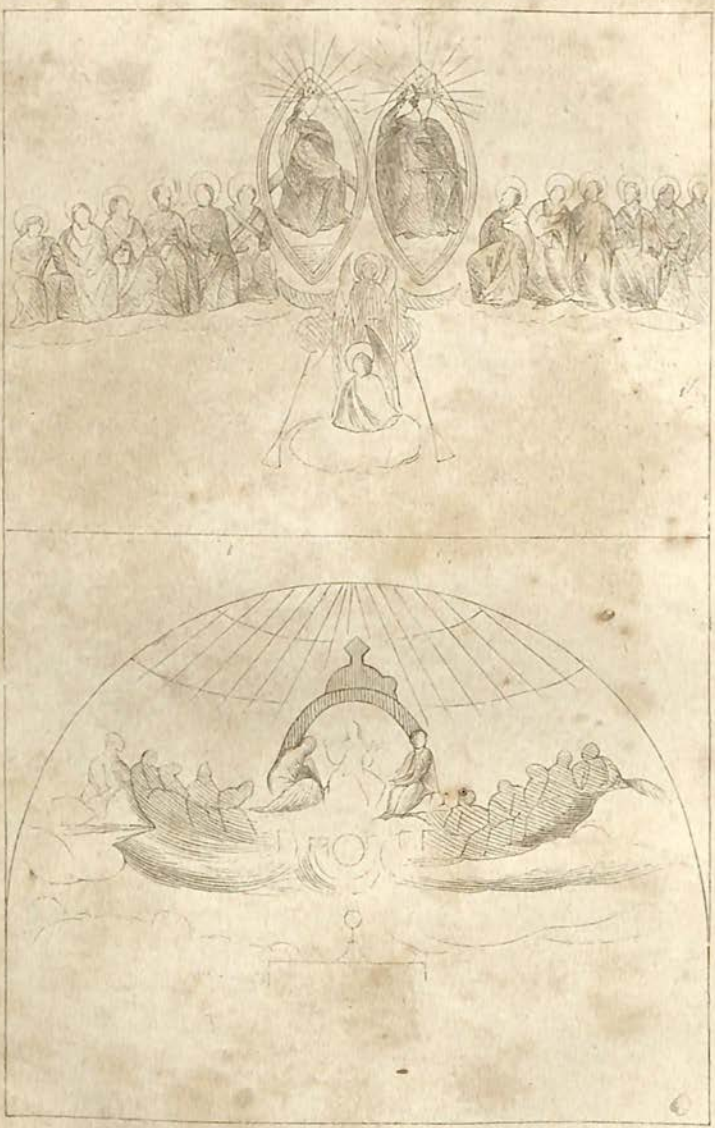
In turning over the engravings from the Campo Santo, the vast superiority in the compositions of Gozzoli over those of the earlier painters, the result almost entirely of his knowledge of perspective, is very striking. It is impossible not to admire the richness and splendour of his architectural backgrounds, though sometimes over-profuse in ornament; but the extensive picture which concludes the history of Joseph can scarcely be praised enough. No story was ever more naturally told—nor grouping more unaffectedly simple. As was the practice in early Art, several points of time are united in one composition, and Joseph appears in three different places; but, what is most remarkable, Gozzoli has adopted three different points of sight in

the perspective. The entire composition is, however, so harmonious, that this violation of a law does not strike the spectator at the first glance; and if it be excusable, the apology is to be found in the fact that if but one point of sight, which must have been the central one, only, had been used, the openings which show the sky and trees, and a distant dome, must have been shut out, and much that is beautiful lost. Not that these excuses should constitute a predecent, for it is always in the power of the painter to adopt an arrangement that needs them not.

But the example of Masaccio in the treatment of architecture with reference to figures is perhaps a better one, and in this he is sometimes to be preferred even to Raphael; for in the engravings I have seen from his works at Florence his backgrounds are always strictly subordinate.

I have heard the diminutive proportions of the architecture in the Cartoons defended on the ground that Raphael's object was to give importance to his figures. But whether it was with this intention or not that he dwarfed his buildings, I have no hesitation in saying that it was not necessary to such an end that he should do so.*—The large architecture which forms the background to Titian's great picture in the church of the Frari, at Venice, ennobles the composition, with no loss of consequence to the figures, the dignity and im-

* It probably arose from his frequent reference to antique bas-reliefs, in which the diminutive architecture is entirely conventional. The general plan of the "Sacrifice at Lystra," is almost copied from one of these. Yet all in it that is of most interest, is entirely Raphael's.



Composition by Orcagna, and Imitation of it by Raphael.

portance of which is the first thing that impresses the mind; nor do the figures in the "Sacraments" of Poussin suffer in the least by the magnitude of the architecture, which the simplicity of its forms and the breadth of its light and shadow sufficiently subordinate to the groups.

But to return to the consideration of perspective. I know not that I can better point out its great value than by comparing the upper part of Raphael's "Dispute of the Sacrament" with the composition which furnished him with its arrangement. The "Last Judgment," by Orcagna, in the Campo Santo, not only suggested the general plan of Michael Angelo's great work, but its lines of the Apostles sitting on each side of the Saviour and the Madonna, furnished the similar arrangement, though not of the same personages, to the "Dispute of the Sacrament." The immense superiority of Raphael's composition need not be pointed out: my object in the comparison is merely to observe how much he gained by his knowledge of perspective, in the elegant semicircular sweep formed by the cloud that supports the figures on each side of the Saviour, and the higher and, therefore, still more curved line of the angels above. This instance of the great value of perspective is the more striking because the composition is not architectural.

Balance of lines and masses is the great principle of general composition; and whether this be obtained by exact symmetry of parts, as in the "School of Athens," or by the many other more irregular plans of arrangement, depends wholly on the subject:—for one form is not more legitimate than another. Nature delights us in

so many different ways that Art may, and indeed should, follow her variety if it would avoid the stagnation of mediocrity,—the invariable result of too exclusive an attachment to any one system.

The first thing we are taught by perspective is, that all objects are apparently altered in magnitude and shape as they approach or recede from the eye, and that these alterations are infinitely varied as the points of distance and of sight are changed. Objects that are perfectly spherical form the only exceptions I can think of to this law, their apparent changes being of size only, and not of shape.

I remember, when I was a student, hearing it argued that parallel perspective must always be untrue, because perspective makes all horizontal lines tend towards points on the horizon, and all perpendicular lines approach each other to meet in a single point perpendicular to the point of sight, and that, therefore, there is no such thing as parallel perspective in nature. But, in such reasoning, one important fact is entirely overlooked, namely, that the plane of the picture itself is subject to the laws of perspective, and becomes altered, more or less, in shape according to the point from which we view it, and carries with it all the lines on its surface that are parallel with, or perpendicular to, the horizon, exactly as such lines, in Nature, would be altered by the laws of vision;—parallel perspective being thus made true by Nature herself.

I am inclined to think that the vanishing points of rectangular objects, when represented obliquely to the plane of the picture, should be always placed beyond

its boundary; for though, in photographs from real architecture, we often see a point of distance chosen that brings one of the vanishing points within the picture, yet, even in these, there is an apparent want of truth, and, certainly, perspective should be so managed as not only to *be* true, but to *look* true. The ceiling of the night-cellar, in which Hogarth's Idle Apprentice is taken into custody, is a glaring and remarkable instance of false perspective, arising from the placing of the vanishing point of its beams within the composition; and, indeed, this is far from the only case of such carelessness in this great artist, who yet took the trouble to publish a print, pointing out some of the gross errors consequent on ignorance of perspective.

His facility and taste in composition were, however, very great; but some of his interiors would have been more true, in effect, had he placed his point of distance further from the plane of the picture, or been less fond than he was of oblique perspective. This is particularly observable in one of the most admirable of his works, the breakfast scene of the "Marriage à-la-Mode,"—in which neither the floor nor the ceiling appear to be level unless the eye is placed so close to the picture as to be unable to see any part of it perfectly. Hogarth seems to have considered it always proper that the spectator should suppose himself to be in the apartment represented. But there is no absolute necessity for this. The side of the room not represented may be imagined open, as in many of Wilkie's compositions, and as in scenes on the stage; indeed, it

is best, as a general rule, that the distance of the eye from the composition should be equal to a line drawn diagonally across the picture from corner to corner. The Dutch painters of interiors have often adopted a nearer point of distance, but then they generally preferred parallel to oblique perspective, and this choice greatly assists the level look of their floors and ceilings. They often, both in interiors and exteriors, availed themselves of the advantage a near point of sight gives in introducing one or two long oblique lines, which, as they managed them, effectually excluded a tame or commonplace appearance from compositions in other respects extremely simple.

The knowledge of perspective, like everything else in which science can render assistance to Art, will be of little use unless constantly under the direction of taste. Much of the impression of a picture depends on the choice of the horizontal line. It was a remark of Stothard that "grandeur might be obtained either by a very high or a very low horizon; but when the horizon is placed in or near the middle of the picture, grandeur of composition must be sought from some other principle." In many of his own pictures we have fine examples of the advantage of a high horizon, and Titian's "Peter Martyr" affords a noble instance of the grandeur of a low one; indeed, Titian's compositions of the "Death of Abel," "Abraham and Isaac," and "David and Goliath," owe much of their impressiveness to the horizon being below the boundary of the picture. This choice was suggested by the adaptation of those great works to ceilings; but there is no reason



ST. PETER MARTYR—by TITIAN

against such a choice in pictures that are to be hung above the eye, and a strong one in favour of it, namely, that the effect will be truer.

As to lines and forms of beauty, the serpentine line is unquestionably, in itself and alone, more beautiful than the straight line, and a round or oval form more beautiful than a square one. But every line, in turn, becomes a line of beauty from situation and contrast, and, in the same way, every form may be made an object of beauty.—Hogarth recommended the pyramidal form of composition as the best; and though, in his own works, we trace much of the pyramid, yet he did not adhere to it so constantly or so rigidly as to give too great an appearance of artifice. One thing may be said in favour of the pyramid, where the composition rises high above the horizon,—that it conforms to the law of perspective I have noticed, by which all perpendicular lines terminate in a point.

It is not a little curious that, in his eagerness to support a favourite theory, Hogarth tells us that the sculptors of the Laocoon made little men of the sons rather than violate the principle of the pyramid in the composition of the whole. He had, perhaps, never seen a cast of the original group, and may have known it only from bad engravings or copies, otherwise it is inconceivable that he could have mistaken the boys for little men. His "Analysis of Beauty" is, however, a book that every painter should read,—as it can never be consulted without profit, if the reader be on his guard against too implicit a reliance on the reasoning

of the author, where his theories of the serpentine line and the pyramid are concerned.

But, whatever may be the utility of Hogarth's theories, his practice is as full of instruction in composition as it is in all other parts of the art. His compositions, and particularly where the story requires an abundance of material, are as full, as rich, and as varied as those of Rubens, and with less apparent artifice. His crowds are always managed with consummate skill. No composition was ever more beautifully built up than his "Southwark Fair;" and the bold lines of the posts of the falling scaffold in the foreground, protruding obliquely into the picture, are of the greatest possible value. Imagine them away, and the composition loses vastly; but from such a work nothing, even to the most minute object, can be spared.

To me, the richest of all his pictures, as a composition, is his "Strolling Actresses." In this matchless work he revels and luxuriates in lines and forms, with a happiness equal to his wit and humour. Every variety of object and shape is here linked together in a harmony "never ending, still beginning," and all is steadied by the long beams of the roof above the motley assemblage of gods and goddesses in rags and tawdry finery, and by the two sweeping lines of the ropes depending from a rafter on which some of the linen of the celestials is hanging to dry. It is by this contrast of long lines or large objects with a multitude of small parts that unity, breadth, and steadiness are to be gained. In the "March to Finchley," the form of

the flag that rises above the crowd near the centre of the picture is of inestimable use in connecting the two wings of the composition,—and of great value also, in such a crowd, is the flat board on the head of the pie-man:—and these instances may serve to direct attention to many other of the felicitous contrivances by which a great painter courts the favour of the eye.

A very striking excellence of Hogarth's compositions is their perspicuity. The eye is never misled or confused, even in his fullest or most complicated subjects, but every object, from the largest to the smallest, tells at once for what it is intended,—yet never obtrusively, never at the expense of the general masses.

As we are indebted to the antique for the best standard of human form, we also derive from the same source much valuable suggestion as to the shapes and castings of draperies and other elegances by which the human figure may be adorned, and its expression aided. But in the imitation of these things, particularly in the casting of draperies, we must never lose sight of the differences between Painting and Sculpture. The close adherence, for instance, of the garment to the limb, showing its form distinctly through it, may be a beauty in Sculpture, but unless accounted for by rapid action, or the effect of wind, it may become a defect in Painting,—a defect we more often find in Michael Angelo than in Raphael. Michael Angelo, indeed, sometimes gives an utterly impossible appearance of the forms of the body through the draperies, but these are among the freaks of genius that should never be imitated. Draperies that entirely conceal the figure, by their ampli-

tude, often impart a grandeur to the most ordinary attitudes. Early Christian Sculpture abounds in fine examples of this,—as do the works of Giotto, Angelico, Masaccio, and many of the early Italian painters; and more grace may be often added by length of line to attitudes in themselves graceful, as the long riding habit worn by ladies gives additional elegance to the manner in which they sit on horseback.

In speaking of drapery, I must again refer to Raphael as a master beyond most others worthy of study; for nowhere is his admirable taste more conspicuous than in the dressing of his figures. He neither overloads them, nor are his lines ever poor or meagre. Action is always aided by the streaming or fluttering, or slighter movement of the dress, and grace made more graceful.

A previous position of the figure may often be indicated by the manner in which part of the dress lies on the ground, or on some other near object; and there are even fanciful modes by which action or meaning may be assisted by drapery. From the shoulders of the visionary figures of St. Peter and St. Paul, in the "Attila," their mantles are in part detached, so as to suggest wings; and, in the "Jonas" of Michael Angelo, the drapery of the prophet is thrown into forms resembling the head and tail of a large fish.

Flaxman compares drapery to language. "As the beauties of the mind," he says, "are seen through and adorned by language, so the graces of the figure are set off by drapery." And his own outlines from Homer, Æschylus, Hesiod, and Dante, furnish beautiful illustra-

tions of the valuable remarks on drapery contained in his lectures. The manner in which his flying figures, now poised in the air, now cutting it with extreme rapidity, and now gracefully floating in space, are aided by their garments, is beyond all praise. Yet, admirable as they are, the painter, in studying them, must not forget that they are the draperies of a sculptor, whose Art admits more of the conventional, in composition, than Painting.

Flaxman's parallel between drapery and language may be carried further; for the well-known witticism, attributed to Talleyrand, that "language was given to man to enable him to conceal his thoughts," is not inapplicable to the usefulness of drapery in concealing the defects of the body. The preposterous fashion of hoop-petticoats, which was carried to its utmost extreme in Spain, in the reign of Philip IV., originated in no good; cravats are said to have been introduced to hide scrofulous throats; and padding the chest is now considered essential to the manliness of the military figure. But the hypocrisy of dress stands no more in need of illustration than the hypocrisy of language. Both are fruitful subjects for the satirist, and by Hogarth every absurdity of the fashions of his time was treated with matchless humour.

Few but must have noticed that the most elegant dress ever fails to adorn some figures; the very folds of a shawl fall awkwardly on vulgar or awkward persons. When Autolycus appears in the Prince's dress, the shepherd remarks that "his garments are rich, but he wears them not handsomely." But where

there is native grace and inborn gentility, the most ordinary attire seems often to dispose itself to advantage, without the least care or study on the part of the wearer. Sterne felt this when he said, "The sweet look of goodness that sat upon my uncle Toby's brow assimilated everything around it so sovereignly to itself, and Nature had, moreover, wrote *gentleman* with so fair a hand in every line of his countenance, that even his tarnished gold-laced hat, and huge cockade of flimsy taffeta became him; and, though not worth a button in themselves, yet, the moment my uncle Toby put them on, they became serious objects, and seemed picked up by the hand of science to set him off to advantage."

In such instances the charm is communicated by the wearer to the dress,—in Art, the taste of the painter must do this, and either turn every change of fashion to advantage with Reynolds, or invest the torn caps and the rags of peasant children and cottage girls with the artless grace of Gainsborough. But though neither he nor Reynolds could explain their secret, nor can we hope to discover it by looking at their works, yet we may be sure that if we really feel their refinement—a refinement far from all vulgar notions of elegance—we shall never stand before their best pictures without some good to ourselves. When Reynolds was asked how he could bear to paint the cocked hats, bonnets, wigs, &c., of his time, he answered, "they have all light and shadow."

Painting has lent itself to every fashion that has appeared in the civilized world, and, in the hands of the great masters, has shown that every fashion, what-

ever its extravagance, may be turned to good account as illustrating manners or character. And here I must again notice the conduct of Hogarth, whose attention to the costume of his day has sometimes been considered as confining his satires too much to the era in which he lived, and therefore a fault. But as his object was to show

> ——— "The very age and body of the time,
> Its form and pressure,"

we must judge him by what he intended, and we shall find that, like a great genius, he has accomplished more than he intended. Indeed, it is having done this that led to the objection I have noticed.

Where the dresses of his time were not beautiful they were always picturesque, and he has availed himself of their forms, in this respect, with as much of taste as he has shown of judgment and humour in rendering them the assistants of character. The different ranks of society, as well as the different professions and occupations of men, were far more marked to the eye by dress a hundred years ago than they are now, and this was an immense advantage in painting subjects from real life. Indeed, I cannot see how it would have been possible for Hogarth to have told his stories, with less attention than he paid to the fashions of the day, while his pictures would have lost greatly in humour, point, and satire. One of the prevailing follies of that time was the imitation by Englishmen of French manners and of French fashions, and this he never omitted any opportunity of holding up to ridicule. The young bridegroom in the first picture of the "Marriage

à-la-Mode" has transformed himself, as entirely as he could outwardly do so, into a Paris beau; and so have the emaciated fop and antiquated belle in his "Taste in High Life." The gentlemen, also, who are seen in the side boxes above his "Laughing Audience," and who are too well bred to care for the play, have undergone the same transformation. And in all this Hogarth is borne out by contemporary authors; for the inn-keeper in Goldsmith's play concludes that Marlow and Hastings may be Londoners because "they look woundily like Frenchmen."

The works of this most genuine English painter, it is true, must be studied to be understood,—not, however, because of their obscurity, but because of their great depth and fulness; and, as Shakespear is in no danger of ever wanting commentators—neither, I am persuaded, is Hogarth.

SECTION XII.

ON COLOUR AND CHIAROSCURO.

"After seeing all the fine pictures in France, Italy, and Germany," writes Wilkie, "one must come to this conclusion, that colour, if not the first, is, at least, an essential quality in Painting. *No master has yet maintained his ground, beyond his own time, without it.*"

It was, perhaps, very much from modesty that Reynolds placed the things he so greatly excelled in lower than I think they should be placed among the attributes of Art. It was natural that he should not think the most highly of what he found so easy; but as I have not the same reason for undervaluing colour and chiaroscuro, I will endeavour to show why I venture to dissent on these points from so high an authority.

In the first letter which he addressed to *The Idler*, he speaks of "critics who are continually lamenting that Raphael had not the colouring and harmony of Rubens, or the light and shadow of Rembrandt, without considering how much the gay harmony of the former or the affectation of the latter would take from the dignity of Raphael." Now I think the following reply to this might fairly be suggested on behalf of the critics. The colouring and harmony of Rubens, instead

of injuring the dignity of Raphael, would, if applied with the discrimination with which Raphael was sure to apply them to his works, unite with it, and add to their value. Imagine, for instance, the "Galatea" with the tone and harmony of Rubens, and the image of a work is immediately presented to the mind of far greater perfection than that picture in its present state,; and that the colour of Rubens may be accommodated to all that is most pathetic, we have a striking proof in his "Descent from the Cross." Whatever may be the deficiency of this great work in historical dignity arises from the grossness of form and want of elevation of character in some of the personages. It may be objected, also, that the dress of the Magdalene is too modern, but the expression of her face, little as we see of it, the grief and reverence with which she receives in her arms the feet of our Lord have rarely been equalled, never surpassed; and the colour and chiaroscuro are of the greatest importance in assisting the deep impression this matchless work must make on every human being that has a heart.

Then, again, as to the light and shadow of Rembrandt being incompatible with the dignity of Raphael, I would say the same thing. Unquestionably not, if used with Raphael's judgment. One of the most remarkable characteristics of that great man was the quickness with which he saw and made himself master of every beauty and excellence in the works of others, —of his contemporaries as well as of the artists who preceded him; and to this it is in part,—we can scarcely say in how great a part, —owing that he



THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS—by RUBENS.

so far surpassed all other painters of his time excepting Michael Angelo.

We often hear of the language and the grammar of Art; and these words are frequently used where there is no real correspondence between the qualities they are put for and the words themselves. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his fourth Discourse, speaks of Paul Veronese and Tintorett as possessing merely the language of painters;—and adds, "it is but poor eloquence which only shows that the orator can talk." Now let us, for a moment, consider what are the qualities thus compared to language,—that is, to a system of mere arbitrary signs of things, which, having no resemblance to the things themselves, vary in every nation under Heaven. The powers of Art, thus compared to language, present us with the most vivid images of all that Nature addresses to our sight; and these images are given to us by Paul Veronese with a greater degree of general truth than by any other painter on so large a scale as that of his principal works. He unites exquisite harmony and purity with the greatest brilliance and force of colour, and the most unaffected system of light and shade. He has elegance, grace, dignity,—and in some of his compositions a grandeur of style not unworthy of Michael Angelo; while Tintorett, possessing many of the highest excellences of colour, appeals irresistibly to our imagination by the power of his chiaroscuro.

It is not unfair to rate the qualities of Art by the difficulty of their attainment, and the rarity with which we find them in any tolerable degree of perfection. A

poet may in a word or two convey an idea of the complexion of a beautiful woman, and those words often very vaguely used. In the hands of Shakespear, "Nature's pure red and white" are sufficient; but the painter, to do this, must engage in actual rivalry with Nature herself,—a contest in which a distant approach to her is allowed to constitute success. And even such success, in the colour of flesh, has not, perhaps, been perfectly attained by twenty artists with whose works we are acquainted—Paul Veronese being one.

Some critics have gone farther than Reynolds, and, in a sweeping way, denounced all the varied excellences of the Dutch and Flemish schools as the language, only, of Art. Writers who have no practical knowledge of Painting may thus condemn what they do not understand; but should any *artist* be disposed to listen to them, I would advise him to try to paint the commonest object as the best Dutch painters would have painted it, and I am much mistaken if he will not soon acknowledge their transcendent excellence.

But I must again dissent from Sir Joshua when I find him considering colour as a merely sensual element of Art. It is certainly no more so, in the common and gross meaning of the word, than form, or light and shade. All these may be equally used to render subjects that appeal to our animal propensities attractive, and Sculpture may be, and often is, as sensual as Painting ever can be.

But colour, it is said, is sensual as addressing itself to the sense of sight only, and not to the mind. This,

however, like the first objection, applies no more to colour exclusively than to any other quality of Art. Beauty of form or truth of light and shadow address themselves as much to the eye, and no more to the mind than colour, unless they express a sentiment,—and colour may appeal to the mind as powerfully as either, in the expressions of gaiety, of sadness, or of solemnity. When we hear, as we often do, this peculiar distinction of Painting called a merely ornamental quality, we must remember that every part of the Art is ornamental;—and if colour be more so in some schools than in others, it is only because it is truer, in those schools, to Nature. We must not confound the materials the Venetian painters introduced into their pictures with the media of their Art;—the effects of their rich velvets, satins, brocades, &c., with those beauties of Nature, her brightness, splendour, and harmony, which they first gave in perfection, and which might as well adorn the poorest and coarsest materials as the richest. It is not that Paul Veronese is gayer in colour than Raphael,—but he is truer, and seems completely to have attained that which Raphael aimed at in nearly all his subjects, namely, the broad light of tranquil mid-day. It is curious that, when Paul Veronese visited Rome, he studied the frescoes of the Vatican *for their colour;* and seems to have derived a fondness for shot, or changeable draperies, very much from Raphael.

The most solemn, the most mournful tones, and tones suited to the most sublime subjects, may be found in the works of Titian, of Tintorett, and even of Paul

Veronese, as well as colour the most magnificent; but the distinguishing excellence of the Venetian and of the Dutch and Flemish schools is that, whatever be the choice of colours,—whether the tints be brilliant, rich, or negative,—whether the effects be light or dark,—the true tone of Nature is spread over the whole.

I can never therefore think that Venetian or Dutch colour can do otherwise than exalt the highest subjects; and it seems to me a most injurious error for painters to consider colour a thing that may be either neglected as a minor excellence or deliberately rejected as inconsistent with other qualities. Such may be a convenient mode of thinking, but I am convinced it never was the way in which any really great painter ever thought or felt,—and it is curious to see, in the writings of Reynolds, his natural love of colour breaking out in detached passages, and confuting his own theory of the incompatibility of the excellences of the Venetian or Dutch with those of the Roman schools. He admits in one place that the colour of Titian might assimilate with the grandest subjects,—and in another he says, "Jan Steen had a fine manly style of painting that might become even the design of Raphael."

I trust that, in the foregoing remarks, I shall not be thought to undervalue the authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds as a general writer on Art, any more than I can be supposed indifferent to his transcendent excellence as a painter, or to the benefits he has conferred, far beyond any other man, on the school of which he was the founder. Indeed, it is because he justly ranks amongst the highest authorities in criticism that I have

thought it necessary to point out what appears to me an injurious tendency in one part of his writings; and I would accompany what I have said by remarking, that all theories, how great soever the names that sanction them, if formed solely on the practice of particular schools, should be carefully examined before they are implicitly relied on.

In every country in the world, in which anything like Art has appeared, a taste for colour seems to have been one of its earliest developments. We see it in the pictures of the Egyptians, and in the decorations of their mummy cases, and even the American Indians often display happy contrasts in the colours with which their manufactures are adorned. In the paintings of the Chinese, the decorations of their porcelain, the patterns of their silks, and the ornaments of their furniture, we find an exceeding refinement of taste in the selection and arrangement of colours;—the most vivid tints are harmonised by contrast with the most delicate, and an admirable balance is preserved between positive and negative hues. The same is true, though in a less degree, of the Persians, and other so-called semi-barbarous people; and it is very remarkable that we never see in the pictures and manufactures of these semi-barbarians those glaringly vulgar combinations of colour that so frequently occur in the manufactures and Art of the most civilized nations of the present day.

In the purchase of a carpet, for instance, with how much of the vulgar finery of colour the eye is wearied before it can find anything equal to the beauty of a Persian pattern; and how far more agreeable is the

effect of the Chinese to the Sèvres porcelain, though the pictures on the former leave out light and shadow and set perspective utterly at defiance, while those on the latter profess to be complete works of Art.

This was strikingly exemplified in the great Exhibition of 1852. In the apartment containing the French tapestries, there were no combinations of colour among them that were not tawdry, excepting in those from Beauvais, which were exact copies of Persian carpets; and though the porcelain and other manufactures of China were very scantily represented, yet the superiority of the arrangements of their colour to the greater portion of such displays in the European departments was very remarkable.

At the revival of Painting, the Italian, Flemish, and German schools all began with that feeling for colour common to the infancy of the Art among every other people. All the advantages derived from contrast, balance, and purity of tints, appear previously to the invention of oil painting, and before the chiaroscuro of Nature was perceived. Among the earliest specimens of the union of chiaroscuro with colour, are the works of the Van Eycks. Our National Gallery fortunately possesses two pictures of the highest excellence by John Van Eyck, remarkable for a deep and solemn splendour of tone not surpassed, and indeed not very often equalled by later painters. But that the high estimation in which Mediæval Art is held has, in the present age, led to little else than mere *mimicry* of its most superficial characteristics is evident to me from the entire want of perception of the beauty of its

colour in all attempts towards its revival. Gilded backgrounds and halos, a hard precision of line, and a flatness of surface, from which all the gradations of Nature are carefully excluded, are given: but if true imitation should ever take place of this copying of the mere husk of the primitive styles, these things will be omitted, and the harmony, power, and brightness which, with few exceptions, distinguish their colour, will be felt.

In estimating the differences between good and bad colourists, we often, I believe, attribute too much to organization and sensibility. We say such a one has a fine eye, and another has no eye for colour. But how are we to account for the fact that entire schools and ages have excelled in colour, while to every individual in other schools and ages a perception of its beauty seems to have been denied? The German, Dutch, and Flemish schools, for example, have had more than one period in which all their painters coloured well; but for a century or more, dating from the present time back, though in these schools there have been many artists of great ability, there has not existed a single excellent colourist. It cannot be that Nature gives to men faculties in one age that she entirely denies them in another, but it must be that men cultivate faculties in one age that at other times they suffer to lie dormant, or in the cultivation of which they are hindered by accidental causes.

The critics of the last century attributed every excellence to Raphael; but no one would now place him on a par with the greatest of the Venetians, as a colourist;

and indeed I have heard it said, comparing him with Rembrandt, that "the *Art of Painting* was unknown to Raphael;"—and this by one of his great admirers.

Yet I see no reason to suppose he was less happily organized to excel in colour than Rembrandt or Titian. The Blenheim picture, an early work, is quite Venetian in tone and harmony, and there are some early pictures by his hand in the Louvre, the landscape backgrounds to which have the amenity of Claude. But after his emancipation from the school of Perugino (a school of colour), Raphael devoted himself much to the study of the antique; and it is certain that the study of form, from stone or plaster, suspends for the time all improvement of the eye in colour, and, if too long continued, destroys its sensibility to hues and tones entirely, and this is strikingly exemplified in the French schools of David and his contemporaries. Now, though Raphael studied the antique with that judgment that rarely deserted him, though he studied it rather in its spirit than its letter, and used it as a guide to, and not as a substitute for, Nature, yet the time spent in attention to it was so much withdrawn from the study of colour, and the substitution of classical draperies for the dresses of his time so much more. It was also his custom to make chalk-drawings from Nature for heads, hands, &c., of his figures, and from these he seems to have painted without again consulting the model. The studies of the Venetians, as Reynolds has remarked, were chiefly made with colours, and so, I apprehend, were those of the German, the Dutch, and Flemish schools. In the British Museum are some

sketches of landscape from Nature by Albert Durer, in colours only. From the time of Raphael to our own, it is indisputable that those painters who have paid most attention to the study of the antique have, with the exception only of Nicolo Poussin, always been the least excellent in colour; while the greatest colourists of all schools have rarely had any acquaintance with ancient sculpture. In our own, for instance, neither Hogarth, Reynolds, nor Gainsborough ever drew or painted except from Nature.

Life is much too short for a mode of study which I hope is less practised now than it was, a few years ago, by many young painters. I mean, devoting two or three years to drawing from the antique, and as many to the life, before they begin to paint. Students were often seen in the Academy and other schools, twenty years of age and more, who had never had a palette in their hands, and who had never given a thought to one of the most captivating parts of the Art by which they were to live. Raphael was probably not twenty when he produced that precious little gem in our National Collection, the "Sleeping Knight." He began to paint under the direction of his father before he entered the school of Perugino; and I must here remark, that whenever I allude to the inferiority of his colour, I mean inferiority only when compared with such painters as Titian; for I believe there are few, perhaps not one, of the works of his own hand in which the standard of colour is not much above that tolerated in the present day, as well among ourselves as on the Continent; and I think the Cartoons alone will justify me in saying so much.

Nicolo Poussin began, also, with painting, under Quintin Varin, and received instructions from Ferdinand Elle, a Flemish portrait-painter, before he commenced the study of the antique; and I believe it will be found that no painter has ever become a tolerable colourist who did not begin with painting, or, at any rate, who did not carry on the study of colour at the same time with the study of form. Michael Angelo painted before he took up the chisel. His first picture represented Saint Anthony beaten by devils. It was a copy from an engraving, but we are told "as there were many strange forms and monsters in it, he coloured no part without referring to some natural object. He went to the fish-market to observe the forms and colours of the fins and eyes of fish; and whatever in nature constituted a part of its composition, *he studied from its source.*" After this, it appears, he practised painting in the school of Ghirlandajo, before he paid any, or at least much, attention to sculpture.

It is true the Royal Academy requires a certain proficiency in drawing from the Antique before it admits the student to the study of the living model. Yet as there are many opportunities, during the vacations and while the Exhibition is open, of painting from Nature, I would strongly recommend such an employment of these intervals—and particularly the practice of portraiture, which has always been, in a great degree, the foundation of the Art of the best historical painters. "Were I to give an opinion," says Opie, "on the prevailing practice of academies, I should say, not that too much attention has been bestowed on

drawing, but that certainly too little has been paid to other branches of the Art. A man who has attained a considerable proficiency in one part will not like to become a child in another; he will rather pretend to despise and neglect, than be thought incapable, or take the pains necessary to conquer it; and therefore it is that though the student must necessarily commence with drawing, he should also very soon begin to attempt chiaroscuro, colouring, and composition, and thus *carry on the whole together* if he wishes to become a competent artist."—Now portraiture embraces all these.

With respect to the Life School and the study from Nature in general, it is a very common mistake to suppose that attention to colour necessarily precludes attention to drawing. "A painter," as Reynolds tells us, "may as well learn to draw with a hair pencil as with chalk;" and if it be the more difficult instrument of the two, there is the more reason for an early acquirement of the command of it. Sir Joshua's own practice affords the best commentary on the value of his advice; for from the early use of the brush he acquired a power of drawing with it of the most enviable ease and taste. His defects in form arose from his ignorance of anatomical structure; but no painter had ever a truer eye for the shapes of the objects before him, or a hand more ready and obedient in transferring those shapes to canvass, with the greatest accuracy and taste. His heads are always inimitably drawn in every view, and the forms of the features, though marked with great firmness and precision, never seem so bounded by an outline, as we see them in

the works of many other painters. The form is given in perfection, while the outline here and there eludes us as it does in Nature. His true feeling for light and shade, also, is a proof of his accurate perception of forms, for light and shade on a single object are the only means to express that which is outline in all other views besides the one given. Then his animals, his horses, birds, dogs, &c., though minute details are omitted, yet what life and character they have, and which could not be there without accuracy in their general forms. I consider, indeed, that Reynolds was a draughtsman of the greatest taste and general correctness, and whatever impression there may be to the contrary, arises from his want of anatomical knowledge, and of acquaintance with the Antique. That he deeply felt these deficiencies is certain; for he lamented them with equal candour and earnestness: and his unfeignedly great admiration of Michael Angelo shows that he fully appreciated the value of the acquirements which he did not possess.

It is a fatal error to believe that Colour is a matter of more easy acquirement than Form; I conceive it to be far more difficult. Form may be measured; its anatomical structure may be investigated, its lines are not changed as tints perpetually are by the shifting light of day or the accidents of reflexes. If the beauties of form are subtle, those of colour are evanescent; and combined with chiaroscuro, from which, in Nature, they are inseparable, they become the last refinements of the Art, as it addresses itself to the eye.

It must be remembered that, at the present day,

there are greater obstacles in the way of our becoming colourists than existed in the infancy of Painting. The discovery of chiaroscuro has much increased the difficulties of colouring; and unfortunately, ever since the time of Raphael, indolence in a study so difficult has been able to shelter itself under the example of him who was indolent in nothing that belonged to the Art.

In regarding the colour of the primitive painters, of all the schools, our admiration must be confined to the brilliancy, transparency, and force of their tints, and the agreeable contrasts of their masses. The true colour of flesh was scarcely perceived till the time of the Bellini, and in their school perfected, only in the hands of Giorgione and Titian; nor were all the delicate varieties produced by aërial perspective given, even by these great masters, in whose styles, indeed, chiaroscuro did not so completely enter as a ruling principle as it did in the styles of Correggio, Rubens, Rembrandt, and their followers. But these things having now become parts of the Art can never again be estranged from it, because they are inseparable from Nature, and are no more to be neglected in our studies than we are to neglect anatomy in the study of form.

The chiaroscuro of a picture is not merely its light and shade, but its light and dark, the light and dark colours contributing very materially to it, whether they are placed in the light portions of the composition or not. Colour and chiaroscuro, therefore, have so entire a dependence on each other, that they can

never be treated separately. Even engraving, which seems to gives us chiaroscuro alone, suggests colour, to the mind, throughout.

The vocabulary in use relating to light and shade is utterly inadequate to convey that knowledge of its phenomena that a painter requires. It comprises merely the terms light, shade, reflection, half-light, and half-shade. Now all lights, with the exception of those belonging to objects self-luminous, as fire, the sun, &c., are either reflections of light from the surfaces of bodies, or transmission of light through those that are transparent or partially so; the focus of light on a globe is, therefore, as much a reflection as that appearance on its shadowed side, which, in ordinary language, is called the reflection; and as to the terms half-lights and half-shades, they but express, if literally understood, single degrees among the endless gradations from light to dark.

It has been said that water receives no shadow: but this is either equally true of all other bodies or not true of water, which is undoubtedly subject to effects that we can no otherwise describe than by the word *shadow*. When, for instance, the sun is shining on the sea, were it possible that the water could be as smooth as a mirror, we should see his disc exactly reflected, and once only, the surface of the water in other places giving an inverted image of the sky:—but as such perfect stillness never occurs, the light of the sun is spread on the surface by innumerable broken reflections from the waves, and refractions through them,—the spaces between each of these lights (as we call them)

reflecting the sky, where again the upper parts of the clouds reflect the sun, and other portions the blue sky or the sea.

The blue of the sky is occasioned by still more minute reflections and refractions of the sun from and through particles of vapour more subtle than those which compose the clouds,—and but for which, in place of the azure, there would, probably, be a void of utter darkness.*

Where clouds or other objects intercept the reflections of the sun from the waves, the reflection of the sky remains, causing those patches of shadow which, seen from a low point, stripe the sea with long lines of blue. It is scarcely necessary to remark that the shadows we see distinctly on the surface of muddy water are projected on the mud within the water, and not on the water itself; as on the face of a looking-glass very faint shadows may always be cast, but these are either on minute particles of dust, or some slight degree of vapour, or on scratches invisible to the naked eye, from all of which the cleanest and most highly-polished mirror is never wholly free.

Lights and shadows, on all objects, are occasioned by the laws I have endeavoured to explain; and the effects described on water, are exactly those which take place on a meadow, the light of the sun being reflected from or transmitted through every blade of grass, and, where intercepted, leaving the reflection of the sky.

* For an account of the most probable cause of the blue colour of the sky, see a paper by R. Clausius, in "Scientific Memoirs," Part iv., published by Messrs. Taylor and Francis.

And on a road, the light is spread by reflections from every particle of sand, gravel, or clay.

Again, if we look close at a polished ball of metal we find a picture of every surrounding object; and this at a distance forms that appearance of light and shade that gives it rotundity to the eye.* Let the ball be dimmed or roughened, and the same general appearance of light and dark is left—equally, though not so palpably, caused by reflection; the forms and colours of the objects pictured on the ball being more or less blended as the surface is more or less dimmed. Indeed, all dull surfaces would be found, if sufficiently magnified, to be composed of inequalities which spread the light exactly as the waves of the sea do—and ground glass would be a true representative of roughened water.

Of what consequence, it may be said, is it that the artist should know this if he copy faithfully what he sees? To which I would reply, that it is of the greatest consequence if it enables him to see better what he copies. All good colourists have recognised

* Professor Wheatstone has made known as far, perhaps, as it can be known, another, and indeed the principal, cause of the projection and relief of objects, excepting in extreme distances, by his admirable invention of the Stereoscope. Till his discovery naturalists were puzzled to account for a single image resulting from double vision, and Gall and Spurzheim endeavoured to explain it by the supposition that one eye only was active at a time, the other only admitting light, and that Nature had given us two merely to provide against the accidental loss of one.

The invention of the Stereoscope throws much light also on the subject considered in the first section of this volume.

the results I have spoken of, in Nature, whether or not they investigated the principles that produce them, and the purity and evanescence of their colouring has been in proportion to their perception of these results. Paul Veronese saw Nature, thus, with a truer eye than Rubens, and a perfect perception of the influence of reflections constitutes that extraordinary charm in the works of De Hooge, which we scarcely find elsewhere on canvass in equal perfection. An investigation of these principles will protect the young artist from the danger of many unfounded aphorisms that he is likely to hear from his elders, and meet with in books, as that shadow is colourless,—that lights should be warm and shadows cool, or shadows warm and lights cool, for a knowledge of these laws will explain, what his eye will soon perceive, that the tones both of lights and shades are infinitely varied according to circumstances;—and that as perspective alters every form to the eye, so reflections change more or less every colour, —harmonising the crude and giving variety to the monotonous; and that shadow, as far as regards Painting, can never be colourless, for it is never solely the result of the absence of light, excepting in situations with which the painter can have nothing to do, as the interior of a cave, to which every opening is closed.

As in Nature, the liquid and the transparent are agreeable to the eye, while the dry, the dusty, the smoky, and the parched, are unpleasant, so all great colourists have aimed at expressing the first-named qualities and avoiding the last; and as, by reflections, a degree of evanescence or apparent transparency is given to

opaque bodies, the perception of this is a reason for the preference of a lucid mode of painting even things that in Nature are not transparent; and if by Rubens, Gainsborough, and other great artists, the use of glazing colours has been too much adopted, yet it is a fault on the right side, for though it may verge on mannerism, yet a transparent mode of colouring will always be far more delightful than an opaque one.

In passing through the streets our eyes are attracted by the splendid tints of the coloured liquids in the shop windows of the apothecaries. To a careless observer, each bottle seems to contain one colour only, and that the most brilliant of its kind; but, on examination, we find that every mass of colour is made up of a great variety of tints caused by reflection and refraction, and that these are perpetually changing with the change of passing objects; now, in these varieties lies the secret of the delight given to the eye. What is true of these bottles is true of every object, in a greater or less degree, for every object *is* capable in a greater or less degree of receiving reflections, and the appearance of all things are, therefore, in some sort, modified by surrounding objects. When Reynolds painted his "Dido on the Funeral Pile," he put together billets of wood, covered them in part with the rich objects he has introduced into the picture, and placed his model on it, in the attitude and dress of the expiring queen. This arose from no want of imagination, nor with the intention of imitating all the minute details of the things he put together; but because he knew that a degree of general truth, and of

the harmony of light and shade and colour might thus be best obtained, and accidental beauties of combination suggested which might not otherwise occur to him. His own remarks on a similar practice by Gainsborough are excellent;—and should such contrivances appear to consume time unnecessarily, I can only say that far more time is often lost in endeavouring to guess at effects, which such contrivances show us at once. Wilkie, in his earlier practice, often made small models of the rooms that formed the scenes of his pictures, with the proper doors and windows, and placed the general forms of his groups and furniture within them —and he had no reason afterwards to regret this as any waste of time.

When the principles I have endeavoured to explain are understood, it will be seen at once how it is that Nature, though some of her combinations are more beautiful than others, at no time offends us by those discords we find in badly-coloured pictures, nor does she ever allow that equal colour over any object whatever, by which painters, who are not close observers of all her delicate varieties, give a disagreeable painted look to the surfaces of things. The golden and silver tones of the great colourists are not inventions of Art, but imitations, imperfect even in the finest pictures, of Nature in her most genial moods.

It has always been felt that harmony is the result of the breaking of positive colour; and those who have not carefully examined how, and why, and in what degree Nature breaks her colours, have no other resource left to avoid harshness than to *dull* every tint. They do not

observe that, while in some places Nature breaks and subdues colour by reflections, in others she doubles and often more than doubles their brilliancy by the reflection and penetration of light. It becomes, therefore, of great consequence that we should imitate the appearance of every object with reference to those that surround it. Yet how contrary is the practice of most painters,—for we perpetually copy living models in our rooms, to which we add landscape backgrounds.

Queen Elizabeth has been much misunderstood in the saying attributed to her that she would be "painted without shadow." If she even used the expression, she meant, what she said at another time, that she would be painted in "*an open garden light*,"—for she saw that there was a great difference between such effect and the effects in pictures. But as the painters of her time could not paint objects as seen in the open air, they painted her literally without shadow. There are portraits by Gainsborough that would perhaps have satisfied her, for some of them really appear as if painted out of doors, and on some of the small figures of De Hooge the effects of open daylight are shown in perfection.

One of the first things a young painter is told is, that whatever colour he introduces into his picture must not be kept single, but repeated or echoed, with some difference either in its quantity or strength, in another part or parts of his composition; and the laws of Nature show that we must do so, because it is in this way that she herself paints, for these laws

always detach a portion of tint from every object, to place it somewhere else; though this is often nearly imperceptible.

In the general arrangement of colours, though Nature leaves us a wide range of choice, yet even here she has laws that we may not break with impunity. Mr. West's theory of arrangement, according to the order in which the primitive and secondary colours take their places in the rainbow, would confine the combinations of effect far too much. But the rainbow furnishes, I conceive, a satisfactory elucidation of the soundness of the advice of Reynolds, that the warm colours, red, orange, and yellow, should be placed in the lights, from which the cold colours, as blue and green, should either be excluded or admitted only in small proportions. Every eye sensible to harmony must feel that unbroken blue is always unpleasant in the high lights of a picture. Green may be made more agreeable, because it is nearer the light of the rainbow than blue. Gainsborough, it is said, painted his portrait of a boy in a pale blue dress, now in the gallery of the Marquis of Westminster, by way of refuting the objection Sir Joshua made to light blue as a large mass. But I agree with the opinion of Sir Thomas Lawrence, that in this picture the difficulty is rather "ably combated than vanquished." Indeed, it is not even fairly combated, for Gainsborough has so mellowed and broken the blue with other tints, that it is no longer that pure bleak colour Sir Joshua meant; and, after all, though the picture is a very fine one, it cannot be doubted that a warmer

tint for the dress would have made it still more agreeable to the eye.

In the most genial aspects of Nature, the blue of the sky always serves as a half-tint to white or golden clouds; and when it is made to tell as a light, by showing itself through the openings of dark clouds, the effect is chilling. As a half-tint, blue, and indeed any cool colour, may be used to great advantage in very large quantities. A familiar proof of this may be noticed in the beautiful appearance of a gilded vane on a steeple, relieved on a deep blue sky. In Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne," there is a great proportion of blue, but as it forms a ground of relief to the flesh, and to the bright red, orange, and crimson draperies, which make the lights, the effect is splendid, and the picture is a fine specimen of that golden tone in which Titian is scarcely ever rivalled. In Her Majesty's collection is the finest work of De Hooge with which I am acquainted. It represents an interior, with a few figures drinking, smoking, and playing at cards. Its largest masses are gray, but as this serves for a foil to warm lights, the tone is delicious, and is exactly that of the finest summer weather. In the lights, there is a predominance of the most refined red and yellow, and though there is one large mass of blue drapery, yet it is of the deepest dye. There is no sunshine in this picture, but something even more beautiful, the reflection of sunshine on an open door, from some object outside, but not seen. In the works of Paul Veronese, we find very large proportions of gray and of blue, but

always as half-tints. In his "Marriage at Cana" there are no single masses of colour so large as the blue of the sky and the gray of the architecture; but on the blue are brilliant white clouds, and the gray of the more distant parts of the architecture serves to give richness to the warmly-coloured marble of the near pillars. Rubens equally understood the value of gray in giving effect by contrast to all other colours; but with Rubens the gray is often of a leaden or slaty tone, while with Paul Veronese it is always silvery. In the "Marriage at Cana," a concert of music occupies the centre, and the picture itself is a concert of exquisite harmony to the eye.*

It is a distinguishing excellence of Paul Veronese that he never exaggerates the principles of Nature to produce an effect. There is no union of midnight shadows with the light of day ever to be found in his works, and which we do find often in Tintoret, the Bassans, Caravaggio, Guercino, and in many other great masters. This is the boldest fiction of chiaroscuro, but it is generally managed by the painters I have mentioned with such address that it silences criticism and forces us to admire, whether we can approve or not. All that can be said in its defence is, that the elements of such a combination are from Nature, though united as Nature does not unite them. Conventionalities like this must be forgiven to genius; but I do not think they are to be recommended to imitation: and in saying so I

* A very large engraving of this picture has lately appeared, which fails in giving its effect, from the want of depth in the translation of the blue portion of the sky.

have no fear of repressing the daring of genius; for genius, such as the men I have mentioned possessed, will always have its own way. Great ability may, however, exist short of theirs; and I would gladly repress all who possess it from attempting things which the success even of greater painters cannot entirely sanction. And there is much need of this caution, because it is far more easy to imitate exaggeration of effect than to make simple truth so impressive as it has been made by Paul Veronese, by Claude, and by the best painters of the Dutch and Flemish schools, including Rembrandt, when he pleases to be included.

A painter should not encourage a dislike to any colour whatever; for there is none that will not look beautiful, in some combination with others, either in Nature or in Art, just as there is no line or form that does not become a line or form of beauty in some situations.

In the difficulty we find in giving tone and harmony to our works, we are apt to take refuge in the belief that time will do for them that which we cannot do ourselves. But we may just as well trust it to time to improve our drawing or composition as our colouring. Occasionally the crudeness of inharmonious colours may be mellowed by age, but age can only make dull painting duller: and though, with the help of varnishes and the glazings to which the unprincipled among picture-dealers often have recourse, a brown or yellow hue may be given, yet *tone*, the most subtle refinement of colour, never yet belonged to any picture unless imparted to it by the hand of the painter himself; and there cannot be the smallest doubt that every finely-

coloured picture was always seen to the greatest advantage as it came fresh from the hands of the master. The reasoning of Hogarth on this subject is conclusive:—"When colours," he remarks, "change at all, it must be somewhat in the manner following,—for as they are made, some of metal, some of earth, some of stone, and others of more perishable materials, time cannot operate on them otherwise than as by daily experience we find it doth, which is, that one changes darker, another lighter, one quite to a different colour, whilst another, as ultramarine, will keep its natural brightness even in the fire. Therefore, how is it possible that such different materials, ever variously changing (visibly after a certain time), should accidentally coincide with the artist's intention and bring about the greater harmony of the piece, when it is manifestly contrary to their nature? for do we not see in most collections that much time disunites, untones, blackens, and, by degrees, destroys even the best-preserved pictures?"*

Sir Joshua Reynolds recommended the tone of Ludovico Caracci's best works as the most suited to the graver and more dignified subjects of history, and Fuseli's eloquent description of its "veiled splendour" presents it to the mind in the most captivating manner. Though unacquainted with the works that so delighted these great artists, I cannot doubt that they deserve the commendations bestowed on them. Still, I do not see why the tones of Titian and of other painters, which may differ widely from the perfection of Bolognese

* "Analysis of Beauty," chap. xiv.

colour, may not sometimes as well suit the most grave and dignified, and indeed the most pathetic subjects. Disastrous events occur as often under serene and brilliant skies, as in the shadows of twilight, and pathos may be heightened by the contrast. Sterne, in relating the most affecting of his stories, says, "the sun looked bright to every eye in the village but Le Fevre's and his afflicted son's."

I have sometimes heard even bad colouring defended, on the ground that the subject was a dismal one; but the more affecting the story, the more does it require the compensation of every excellence of Art to make it endurable. Even the mastery of Rubens is scarcely sufficient to redeem some of his subjects; and I confess it does not excuse to me the barbarity of his "Crucifixion," in the Museum at Antwerp, in which the executioners are breaking the legs of the thieves; and whenever I have visited the Louvre, I have turned with disgust from Jericault's picture of the sufferers on the raft, a work which, though displaying great ability, is as untrue in colour as it is morbid in treatment, the repulsive throughout being, as it were, put in italics. Wretched scenes sometimes present themselves to our sight in real life in which we can neither do nor receive good, and from which we gladly escape if we can; and such subjects conceived in such a manner are like these, and no painter has a right to obtrude them on us. The object of Art should be very different. I can stand before the "Flood" of Nicolo Poussin and admire its pathos, because it is treated with taste, and though it is dismal and terrible, it is not *sickening*.

Young painters sometimes choose subjects of suffering, and treat them in the most offensive manner, in the hope that by making a strong impression they will recommend themselves to notice. But they should be told there is no certain way of making an impression, that will last, but by the sterling qualities of Art. And they should acquire and rely on these, and not on the excitement that may be produced by revolting scenes, —an excitement that the most callous mind will the most easily succeed in effecting.

In speaking of colour to British students, it would be unpardonable to omit speaking of one, now numbered with the great colourists of the past, and who to the end of his life sat working with the students of the Academy.* In the summer of 1849, the principal works of William Etty were exhibited, by permission of the Society of Arts, in the Adelphi; and, excepting in the British Gallery, when the works of Reynolds were displayed there in 1813, I have not seen walls covered with colour so equal in splendour, in truth, and in refinement, as were, on that occasion, the four walls of the Great Room belonging to the Society; and the works there collected afforded abundant proof of the fact that fine pictures gain nothing by time, which had not indeed operated very long on any of them;

* Before Etty was an Academician, he was asked if, in the event of his election, he would discontinue his habits of study in the Life school, and he answered to the effect that he would not, and that if the members of the Academy considered such habits improper in an Academician, he would rather remain a student than become one.

but where there was a perceptible difference of age, the advantage was clearly with the last painted.

I remember Etty, an indefatigable student at "dear Somerset House," as he called it, before his name was known to the public, and when he was looked on by his companions as a worthy plodding person, but with no chance of ever becoming a good painter; and I have no other recollection of the first pictures he exhibited than as black and colourless attempts at ideal subjects.

Yet there may have been, in these early works, a feeling of chiaroscuro which I was then unable to estimate; and, indeed, I have no doubt that he knew a great deal more of the Art than I did, or others who, like myself, could see no promise in his first attempts.

One morning, however, thirty-three years ago, he "awoke famous." It was the morning after the opening of the Academy Exhibition of 1821, in which his splendid composition of "Cleopatra on the Cydnus" had, the day before, unveiled his genius to the public. In the previous year he had gained the admiration of the painters by his beautiful picture of the "Coral Finders," after having exhibited two or three pictures annually for nine years to no purpose.

How often he had sent pictures to the Exhibitions before any of them were received, I know not. His own account of his early disappointments is deeply, painfully interesting. "I got one, two, three, perhaps half a dozen, pictures ready; ordered smart gilt frames, and boldly sent them properly marked, and with a list

of prices. . . . In due time I went to inquire their fate; Samuel Strowger, the Royal Academy porter and only male model, brought forth the book of fate. 'Four out, and two doubtful!' Here was a blow! Well, still there is hope! two, no doubt, will get in. No, *all* were returned, both at the Royal Academy and the British Gallery, *year* after *year!* Can this be?—am I awake? where are all my dreams of success—the flattering tale of hope—where? Driven almost to madness, the sun shone no sunshine to me; darkness visible enveloped me, and Despair almost marked me for her own."

On comparing dates, it appears that he must have been thirty-four years of age when the "Cleopatra" made him known to the world; and he had been devoted to the Art, in mind at least, from childhood.

The works of few painters, collected, would present an appearance so equal in colour as did Etty's pictures when they were seen together. Nothing is more generally striking in such exhibitions than the very different styles of the different periods of practice. But in Etty, after his powers were fully developed, there was little change; certainly no change of principle, for from that time he was right.

But it would be doing him great injustice to confine our admiration to his colour. Many other high qualities are to be found in his works; though not without an intermixture of alloy; such an intermixture, indeed, that I could well imagine a cold-blooded critic looking round the exhibition in the Adelphi, and quoting the words addressed by Mitchell to Thomson,—

"*Beauties* and *faults* so thick lie scattered here,
Those I could praise, if *these* were not so near."

And such a one would well deserve the indignant reply of the poet:—

"Why *all* not *faults?* injurious critic, why
Appears one *beauty* to thy blasting eye?"

But Mr. Gilchrist, a critic of another order, in a review of this exhibition, says, with great truth, "We can scarcely encounter the slightest performance of Etty's hand, on which is not plainly stamped the broad character *great*, in deed or manner." And I will add that even the little pictures of still life, of fruit and of flowers, with which he occasionally amused himself, are proofs of this,—dashed off, as they are, with a zest so far above the painful trifling of such painters as Van Huysem.

Though Etty had not studied landscape in its minute details, he had a genuine feeling for its amenity. No painter ever suggested more delightfully the glow of summer noonday, and many of his landscape backgrounds are as remarkable for their perfect finish, at a distance, as for their boldness of execution, discoverable on a near approach—"masterly without rudeness."

His moonlit seas, his deep blue skies, and that expanse of rippling water which separates the gilded boat from the frame of his picture in the Vernon Gallery, are things soon enumerated, but of the rarest occurrence in Art, with such beauty and truth as he gave to them, and are the natural offspring of such a life as he describes his own to have been.

Before he began to study the Art, he served a

seven years' apprenticeship in a printing office, having been bound at the "tender age of eleven and a half!" Alluding to this he says: "My life has been, since I was free from bondage and pursuing the retreating phantom of Fame, like the boy running after the rainbow, — my life has been, I say (with the exception of some dark thunder-clouds of sorrow, disappointment, and deprivation), *one long summer day;* spent in exertions to excel, struggles with difficulty, sometimes Herculean exertions, both of mind and body; mixed with poetic day-dreams and reveries by imaginary enchanted streams. I have passed sweetly and pleasantly along, —now chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, and regretting my inability to do greater and better things; but God is good, and I desire in all my thoughts to give Him glory in the highest, that He has blessed me and mine with a fair reputation and the solid comforts of life in a degree beyond my deserts; and I now retire from the arena with the best feelings of peace and good-will to my brethren of the Art for their uniform kindness, consideration, and support, in my long professional career."

To me, the most impressive of his pictures is the last of the three from the story of Joan of Arc; and I would here dwell on it as illustrating what I have said on the treatment of tragic subjects; and though this picture and its companions are inferior in completion to the magnificent series from the history of Judith, yet they place Etty higher, as a master of sentiment, though perhaps only because the story is of more interest. The subject of this one, the execution

of Joan, is thus described by the painter: "She had called for a crucifix, a soldier tied two pieces of wood together in the form, and gave it to her; she clasped it to her bosom as the emblem of her redemption; in the meanwhile, Father Avenel, a monk, having procured one, made his way through the crowd, and endangered himself several times to administer consolation to her, till she, perceiving his danger, begged of him at last to consult his own safety, and leave her to her fate! As the smoke and flames cleared away, she was seen clasping the crucifix, and her voice was heard calling on the name of Jesus! Tradition says, a white dove was seen flying towards Heaven."

I can call to mind no picture of such a subject approaching to it in pathos, and, at the same time, so entirely free from all false sentiment.—In looking at it I can think only of the heroine and her fate (so disgraceful to two great nations), for the mind is not drawn from this by any studied elegance in her attitude or in the dark drapery that invests her, as she stands appealing to Heaven with a faith which does not yet conquer her terrors of a frightful death.—The careful manner in which the quaint old houses in the background are painted gives a dreadful reality to the scene, and instead of the usual commonplace accompaniment to such subjects, of a lurid sky, Etty has shown the heavens clear as the soul which is about to wing its way from a cruel world,—and, like a true poet, he has availed himself of the reported incident of the dove rising in snowy brightness.

Something of the mannerism, in forms and attitudes,

of the Lawrence and Westall schools, which in sentiment were the same, may be seen in Etty's Art. That this should be the case, however, was the almost inevitable result of his placing himself in early life under Lawrence:—so difficult are the impressions received in youth to be effaced, even where, as with Etty, there is great originality and strength of mind.

He has told us, in his Autobiography, that though he painted in the house of Sir Thomas, he received little or no instruction from him. Still, the contemplation and copying the works of that eminent man could not but in some degree affect his style, and indeed the Art of Lawrence had so much of fascination in it as to maintain a widely-spread influence over the rising talent of the day; and gradually to undermine till it almost entirely superseded the taste imparted by Reynolds and Gainsborough to English portraiture.

If Etty acquired a tinge of something in the house of Lawrence which he might better have been without, it is greatly to his praise that he came from it a colourist destined to rank with the very best that have lived; for the school of the great portrait-painter was certainly not one of colour. But I believe his first impressions of harmony were derived more from Fuseli, who, even if his pictures did not prove his sensibility to the refinements of colour, has sufficiently shown it in his lectures, and in no sentence more than in that in which he tells us he had always "courted colour as a despairing lover courts a disdainful mistress." A mistress, as I have before noticed, much less disdainful than he imagined.

There is a question on which it may not appear to be my province to enter; but it is one which Etty's peculiar treatment of and choice of subjects must present to most minds;—I mean the question of how far his frequent preference of the nude may or may not be defended. It is true that in entire nudity there may be nothing objectionable, while figures clothed to the chin, if but an eye be seen, may convey the grossest meanings. But I scarcely remember a female face by Etty in which the expression is impure; and if I wished for a personification of innocence, I know no painter's works among which I could more readily find very many instances that would answer to it. I remember, years ago, borrowing from him to copy, a head of a young girl, of such angelic purity of expression, that I returned it after having destroyed all the attempts I made to repeat it, because, in all, I had failed to catch the beauty either of the expression or of the colour.

In considering the question of the propriety or impropriety of nudity, I can call to mind no display of it in the works of Raphael, of Stothard, or of Flaxman, that seems to me objectionable. But this I cannot say of the works of Titian, Correggio, Rubens, and others of the great colourists, masters between whom and Etty there was more in common.

He was aware of the imputations that were cast on his character by those who knew him only in his works.—"I have been accused," he writes, "of being a shocking and immoral man."—And in another part of his Autobiography, so deeply interesting to all who knew him, for all who did knew his entire sincerity, he says,

"as a worshipper of beauty, whether it be seen in a weed, a flower, or in that most interesting form of humanity, lovely woman, an intense admirer of it and its Almighty author,—if at any time I have forgotten the boundary line that I ought not to have passed, and tended to voluptuousness, I implore His pardon. I have never wished to seduce others from the path and practice of virtue, which alone leads to happiness here and hereafter; and if in any of my pictures an immoral sentiment has been aimed at, I consent it should be burnt; but I never recollect being actuated in painting by any such sentiment."

The apology which he makes for his extraordinary predilection for the nude, namely, that "he preferred painting the glorious works of God to draperies, the works of man," is based on the mistake of considering artificial objects as less poetic than natural ones; an error which has been completely exposed by Lord Byron in his controversy with Mr. Bowles.

Etty's Art was in the end substantially rewarded. But I fear the extent to which he was patronized must not be entirely considered as proceeding from a pure love and true appreciation of what is excellent in painting. It cannot be doubted that the display of the female form, in very many instances, recommended his pictures more powerfully than their admirable Art; while I entirely believe that he himself, thinking and meaning no evil, was not aware of the manner in which his works were regarded by grosser minds.*

* Painters must not be unmindful that a display of nudity exposes their works to alterations by unskilful hands. Un-

From my own knowledge, I am enabled to say of Etty, that his conduct as an Academician was invariably marked by the most unremitting and disinterested zeal for the prosperity and honour of the society of which he was so distinguished an ornament. He considered, indeed, the welfare of the Academy as identical with the general welfare of the Arts of his country. Naturally shy, he never spoke at our meetings without a great effort, yet never was he silent on any occasion on which he thought he could serve the institution. There was a simplicity and sincerity in his manner that greatly attached his friends; and I never could discover in him the least sign of jealousy or other unworthy feeling towards any of his brother artists. I knew much of him in the early part of his career; and, destined as he was to see many of his fellow-students, younger than himself, pass by him into notice and patronage, while he was still working in obscurity, no murmur escaped him, no expression of envy towards those who, often with far less of merit, were outstripping him in the road to fame.

I have more than once alluded to the inferiority in

skilful, because the presumption that would alter the work of another is rarely to be found in those who are capable of doing it well. The grand lines of Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" were disturbed while he was yet living, to satisfy the modesty of the bigoted persecutor, Paul IV., who wished to destroy the entire work; and the Graces in Rubens' "Education of Mary de Medicis" have been draped, to the great injury of the picture.

Such meddling cannot be too strongly reprobated, and I must not let this opportunity pass without noticing that some of Etty's beautiful studies from the life have been ruined by the addition of backgrounds since his death.

colour of Rubens to the greatest of the Venetian painters; and yet I am not sure that the impression of such an inferiority may not be owing to the fact that a very great portion of the works that pass for his are his only in conception and composition, for there never was so large a *manufactory* of Art as that of which he was the head; and if by such a system as he established at Antwerp the world is a gainer in the *quantity* of great works, it is a loser in their *quality*.

I suspect that something of the same system may account for the extreme difference in colour discoverable in the works of Nicolo Poussin, which cannot be attributed to the changes of time, or the obtrusion of the dark grounds of some of them, for his inferior pictures are not only dull in tone, patchy in the colour of the draperies, and dingy in the flesh, but they are feeble and tame in execution, and the figures often short and ill-drawn, the faces having the look of masks, from the hard marking of the flesh round the eyes. Many of this class are in the Louvre, which, had I met with them anywhere else, I should have believed to be indifferent copies.

His subjects from classic fable, and his landscapes, are, with but few exceptions, those in which he shows himself a colourist; and, indeed, it is evident that these, more than any others, are the subjects he loved. In our National Gallery, the "Cephalus and Aurora," and the "Education of Bacchus," and the "Sleeping Nymph," are the finest specimens of his colour; the last, indeed, is the finest I ever saw. We look at them all, however, through a coating of reddish-yellow

varnish, through which Poussin never saw his pictures, and of which I shall again speak.

The just reproach of Fuseli, that "crudity and patches frequently deform his effects," though it may not be entirely owing to the employment by Poussin of another hand to execute his designs, is, I believe, mainly attributable to this, while the wide difference in colour discoverable in the landscapes of Claudè is the result of what Constable was the first to notice, namely, the decline of his powers with declining age. "We are not always," he said, "buying *a Claude* when we are buying a picture painted by him;" and the landscape bequeathed to the National Gallery, by Mr. Hollwell Carr, "David at the Cave of Adullam," is an instance of the loss of his brightness of colour towards the close of his life.

If painters, at an advanced age, often *cease* to be themselves, so, in early youth, there is a time of their practice before they *begin* to be themselves. I do not, however, think that a picture, with the name of Giorgione, lately added to the National Gallery, can be a specimen of the early practice of any painter. The figure in armour, sprawling on his knees, is the best thing in it; but I can scarcely believe this figure, and assuredly not the Madonna and Child, to be the work of Giorgione, who had always a fine sense of grace and dignity. Nor is the absence of these qualities atoned for by anything that impresses me as religious sentiment, nor by any remarkable excellence of the colour, of which it can only be said that it is not inharmonious.

As in drawing the general practice in schools is to begin with copying statuary, so in painting the usual practice is to commence with copying pictures. But this, if continued too long, is apt to become a mere employment of the hand and eye, with which the mind has little to do. There is not, however, much need of a caution on this point, as they who are likely to distinguish themselves by original works do not belong to that class that continue year after year to multiply misrepresentations of the old masters, or to avail themselves of the privileges of copying pictures in the National and British Galleries, and in the Royal Academy, for the purpose of selling their copies. He who wishes to become a painter will not part with his copies, but will keep them constantly in sight, covering the walls of his rooms with them, and with the best engravings he can procure from the best pictures, instead of hanging up his own works, and he will daily see in these some beauty unobserved before, and thus gradually acquire principles not to be communicated in any other way, as good manners are acquired by living constantly in the best society.

The student who is destined to distinguish himself will acquire the principles of his Art from all objects that surround him. He will find even the spoons and glasses on his table full of instruction in the exquisite beauties resulting from the reflection and refraction of light, the laws of which, as I have endeavoured to show, are the laws of Nature's harmony. He will see that silver is more beautiful than gold, and colourless glass more beautiful than coloured, because

they reflect the hues of surrounding objects more vividly.

I cannot but look on the late introduction of the gayest colours into the manufacture of glass as among the many symptoms of the decline of taste in ornamental manufactures, arising from that growing love of vulgar finery that has led to so much of mistaken and clumsy imitation of the Louis Quatorze and mediæval styles of furniture.* But, in saying this, I must not be thought insensible to the beauty of the old stained windows of our cathedrals, though in the modern imitation of these I have rarely seen instances of success.

But to return to the subject of copying. I have often observed in the painting school of the Academy, that the attention of students is too anxiously directed to the discovery of the materials used in the picture they are studying. It may be useful to ascertain these, but it is seldom easy, and often not possible, and the great object in copying should be to look for the principles from which the beauties of the picture result, independently on the mere pigments employed in it. With respect to these and the vehicles used by the great painters of the Flemish school, we may learn far more from Sir Charles Eastlake's "Materials for the

* Every age of this country has been marked by a style in furniture which, whether good or bad, had at least a distinct character of *some* degree of originality, down to the present century, which seems destined to leave behind it a confusion of styles, which will be distinguished only from those they mimic by the blunders that are unavoidable in all attempts at literal imitation in Art or even in manufactures.

History of Oil Painting,"* than we can ever learn by copying their pictures.

Assuming that this invaluable work is in the hands of every painter, I will merely offer a few general observations on the subject of vehicles, the result of my own experience, now extending over a space of more than forty years.

The "Venetian secret," as it is called, has little to do with chemical secrets, for I am persuaded that Titian would have coloured as finely as he did with the materials used by any school, while the colours or grounds of Titian would not have enabled David to imitate flesh. "He," as Fuseli says, "who cannot use the worst materials, will disgrace the best." It is very important, however, that the causes that so often lead to the premature decay of pictures should be understood, for unfortunately some of the greatest painters of the British school have been lamentably careless in this matter. The intense desire of Reynolds to obtain every possible charm of colour, tempted him too often to use the most fugitive pigments, because they were the most beautiful, and to heighten their effects by ruinous mixtures of wax, varnishes, &c.; and in this he was followed by Turner, some of whose pictures I have known to crack before the exhibition was closed in which they first appeared.† Many of Wilkie's pictures have suffered from being varnished too soon, or from the inordinate use of macgilp made of drying oil and mastic

* Sir Charles has promised us a volume on the Italian Schools.

† Turner often used water-colours over oil, and then again oil-colours over water.

varnish, and the use also of asphaltum, a material which I believe never thoroughly dries, but is apt to crack like pitch on a fence.

The simplest mode of painting is the most secure; and it is evident that by methods extremely simple many of the great colourists have produced their finest works, and among these may be named Titian himself. I have seen exquisitely-coloured pictures by Jan Steen, as perfect in their surface and as free from the slightest change as if they were painted but yesterday, evidently from the use of virgin tints only, tints not produced either by glazing or scumbling. And the same simple method seems to have been the general practice of Paul Veronese. Not that transparent colours were excluded, but that a thin filmy method of obtaining the tints was avoided.

All dryers are in some degree injurious, and I have little doubt that, by working more leisurely than we do, by not overloading our colours, or by proceeding with more than one picture at a time, so as to allow each sufficient intervals of rest, dryers of every kind may be dispensed with, from sugar of lead to drying oil.

If, in the extreme beauty of his colour, the example of Reynolds has been of inestimable value, yet with respect to many of the means by which he wrought —means not essential to his end—the precedents he established have been injurious. His practice, at one time, of beginning his faces in light and shadow merely, and adding the colour by glazing, has not only left among his works many beautiful wrecks of beautiful faces, but has led to a very common practice among students, of

preparing their flesh for glazing, and thus beginning with tints unlike the object in Nature at which they are looking. This method is injurious to the sensibility of the eye, and it is assuredly best, from the very beginning, to endeavour at exact imitation of the colour of the object before us, a practice Reynolds himself adopted at a later period of his life.

Some of our painters were not a little alarmed at the introduction of fresco, lest it should bring with it a neglect of the beauties of colour. But though incapable of the deep transparency of oil, it does not preclude its lighter and gayer effects, and Etty's three fresco sketches from "Comus," now in the possession of Mr. Wethered, are charming proofs of this.

When the decoration of the walls of the Houses of Parliament was proposed, Mr. Haydon delivered an admirable lecture at the Royal Institution, in which he thus contrasts the effects of fresco and oil:—"The power of fresco lies in light; the power of oil in depth and tone. Oil is luminous in shadow—fresco in light. A mighty space of luminous depth and 'darkness visible' gives a murky splendour to a hall or public building. A mighty space of silvery breadth and genial fleshiness, with lovely faces, and azure draperies, and sunny clouds, and heroic forms, elevates the spirits, and gives a gaiety and triumphant joy to the mind. The less shadow in decoration the better."

The specimens of fresco by Mr. Redgrave, Mr. Cope, and Mr. Horsley, lately placed in the shade and between windows at Hampton Court, show in a striking

manner how admirably it is adapted to situations in which oil painting would be lost. The quantity of light received and reflected by their grounds of lime is really wonderful.

The subjects treated in this section are not unconnected with the vexed question of picture cleaning; and I will conclude it, therefore, with some remarks on this very important matter.

Pictures, like ourselves, are not only subject to the inevitable decay of age, but to a variety of diseases caused by heat, cold, damp, and foul air.* Many, and they, too, are among the most delicate and beautiful, have, like Leonardo's "Last Supper," and a large proportion of the works of Watteau, of Reynolds, and of Turner, unsound constitutions given to them by the authors of their existence, and are thus subject to premature and rapid destruction. These liabilities, and the many accidents to which they are exposed, have made picture restorers as important a class in Art as physicians and surgeons in life; and, as might naturally be expected, there are many unskilful among them, and many ignorant quacks. Still we cannot dispense with their aid, and nobody can be acquainted long

* To this last evil—one very injurious to pictures—the National Collection will remain exposed as long as the indiscriminate admission of the public is continued, and by which the rooms are often so crowded that nobody can see the pictures, which, in the mean time, are suffering greatly from the dust carried in, and the atmosphere that is generated. Why might not an office, not far from the Gallery, be established, at which tickets should only be given to those who can write their names? It may safely be affirmed that fine pictures can afford no instruction to those who cannot.

with Art and not have noticed many instances of the restoration of pictures, if not to their entire original condition, yet infinitely nearer to it than could be imagined possible. Within the last year the restorations effected by Mr. Bentley of many of the pictures of Mr. Thomas Baring's collection, which seemed irreparably injured by fire, were truly wonderful. Here I can speak feelingly; a picture of my own was so changed by heat and smoke (in some parts light colours turned to black), that I could do nothing towards its recovery short of repainting the whole; yet it was restored by Mr. Bentley. Another remarkable instance of skill in this art is the well-known re-union of the halves of one of the very finest pictures of Cuyp, the sunset view of Dort, belonging to Mr. Holford.* This was effected by Mr. Brown, the difficulty being rendered very great by the circumstance that the picture had been cut through a portion consisting of bright sky and water. Such are the triumphs of restoration, of which I could mention other instances within my own knowledge, effected by Mr. Seguier, who has been so often assailed for having removed nothing but dirt from those pictures in the National Gallery with the cleansing of which he was entrusted. But then, on the other hand, I could tell of injuries nearly amounting to destruction, inflicted by

* In this picture there is a beautiful gradation from warm to cool colour in the sky; and when divided, the warmer half was called "Evening," and the cooler "Morning."

I have heard that the picture of the "Ages of Human Life," in the Bridgewater collection, narrowly escaped being cut in two when it was brought to England.

ignorant pretenders to the art. I remember some of the most beautiful works of Sir Joshua Reynolds at the British Gallery in 1813, almost as they came from his hand, which I have since met with, rubbed down to the dead colour, and then again, after a short interval, smeared over with brown varnish, under the pretence of restoring the tone.

The attacks that have been so unsparingly directed against the cleaning of pictures in the National Gallery have been generally founded on the assumption that the tone of a fine picture is always imparted to it by a general glazing, and that, in the removal of this, its most valuable quality is destroyed. But it is so far from being true that the best colourists finished their pictures with a general glaze, that I believe the cases in which they have done so have been exceptional. Reynolds sometimes, but not always, did this; and it appears, by his own account, to have been the invariable practice of Mr. Haydon: but I know it was not the practice of Turner, of Etty, of Constable, or of Wilkie, and I feel confident it was not of Paul Veronese, Rubens, Claude, the Poussins, or Cannalletti.

Much has been said about what has been taken *from* the pictures in the National Gallery, but nothing about what has been put *on* them. I do not believe that anything injurious has been added to them since the establishment of the Gallery, unless it may be oil varnish, which has become more yellow; but about the beginning of the present century it was not unfrequent for the possessors of old pictures to have

them *toned*, as it was called. The noble landscape by Rubens, then the property of Sir George Beaumont, was saturated with linseed oil to prevent its scaling from its panel, and this was suffered to dry on the surface. There is, therefore, under the deep yellow coating that now covers it, a fresh and natural picture, the picture Rubens left, and which the world may never be permitted to see again. The "St. Nicholas" of Paul Veronese has been happily relieved from the brown glaze or oil bestowed on it forty or fifty years ago; but Sebastian del Piombo's "Raising of Lazarus"* remains still under the gradually-deepening obscurity it was consigned to about the same time; and so do the large landscape by Salvator Rosa, the landscape called "Phocian," by Nicolo Poussin, and others, which, taking these as guides, will easily be discovered as involved in the same misfortune. Goldsmith, in the "Vicar of Wakefield," tells us, what no doubt he himself had seen, that a would-be connoisseur in an auction room, "after giving his opinion that the colouring of a picture was not mellow enough, very deliberately took a brush with brown varnish that was accidentally lying by, and rubbed it over the piece with great composure before the company, and then asked if he had not improved the tints." I have myself seen a common workman in an auction room

* In the great room of the Louvre hangs a fine picture by Sebastian, "The Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth," which remains as the painter left it, and there cannot be a greater contrast in tone than it presents to the "Raising of Lazarus."

smear a thick coat of varnish over a fine picture, in the most hurried and careless manner, to make it look well at the sale,—and I am sorry to say that even respectable dealers are apt to load with varnish, to an injurious degree, pictures they are anxious to sell.

SECTION XIII.

ON THE COLOUR OF RAPHAEL'S CARTOONS, AND THEIR PRESERVATION.

In the last section I briefly alluded to the colour of Raphael's Cartoons, a thing, however, not to be slightly passed over, as I believe they are the most entire specimens of the work of his own hand, when in the meridian of his powers, that exist. The very fact of their being Cartoons, as I have before noticed, seems conclusive; and though the herons in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," were painted by Giovanni d'Udine,* and the pillars of the "Beautiful Gate" by another

* Fuseli objects to the introduction of the herons, but when it is remembered that these birds were and are held sacred in the East, being considered emblematic of piety, their presence is certainly not out of place, and their tameness in approaching so close to the figures is accounted for. One of them elevates its head in the act of drinking, an action noticed by Bunyan in domestic fowls as expressive of giving thanks to Heaven, and it may not, perhaps, be an over-refinement to suppose that such a thought occurred also to Raphael.

assistant, I have no doubt that in the faces, figures, and draperies, in all, indeed, excepting those subordinate parts which might as well be trusted to others, we see the work of Raphael's own fingers.

If they have not the excellences of Paul Veronese, still the colour of the Cartoons is clear, healthy, and vigorous, and the value of gray in everywhere setting off the positive colours, is as fully felt as in works that may be referred to as models of colour. The finest in effect appears to me to be the "Punishment of Elymas," a picture that would not, when the limits of distemper are considered, detract from a Venetian reputation.

Among the changes in them by time or accident, the loss of red from the mantle of the Saviour in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" cannot admit a doubt. The reflection of it in the water is red, and we know that red and blue are colours very rarely departed from, in the drapery of the Saviour, excepting at the transfiguration, and after the resurrection. The white, shaded with umber, of the mantle as it now appears, is evidently according to a method in which many of the draperies have been prepared, and to which colour has been added by a thin glaze or wash. In the "Sacrifice at Lystra," the dress of the priestess, who kneels immediately behind the man holding the bull, has been prepared in this manner, after which a tint of green has been passed over it, which time or accident has completely removed from the greater portion of the umber and white, as the red is gone from the drapery in the "Miraculous Draught." If the experiment be tried, of making a coloured sketch of this

cartoon, substituting a red mantle for the white one, it will be seen at once that a balance of colour is given to the picture, which it now wants.

A probable difference between the choice of colours by Raphael, and what it might have been by Paul Veronese, were he capable of conceiving the Cartoons, would perhaps have shown itself, not in more, but in less of gaiety in the colours of the draperies. Raphael has not, in any instance, made use of black, which no Venetian painter would have omitted; and in comparing the colour of these great works, with the general treatment of similar subjects by Paul Veronese, we must feel how unfounded is the supposition of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that Venetian colour is inconsistent with Roman design.

It is said that when Tintoret was asked which were the most beautiful colours, he replied, "black and white." Whether he meant to mark the importance of light and shadow, or that black and white, though in themselves not colours, give the greatest possible value by contrast to every colour, it is certain that he, like all the other great Venetians, availed himself of black and white with consummate skill, as did the later Dutch school, and this seems to me one point in which the colour of these schools has an advantage over that of Raphael; while another superior excellence of the Venetians and the Dutch lies in the taste with which they managed the infinite variety of tints to which we can give no names.

There is a small picture by Paul Veronese at Hampton Court, a Saint Catherine kneeling at an

altar, with other figures, in which the hues are so negative that no tint can be called red, blue, yellow, or green. Yet it is a beautiful harmony, and as far removed from monotony as from dulness. By comparing this with the Cartoons, the student will see, in respect to choice of colour, where Raphael and Paul Veronese differ,—while in another St. Catherine, by the latter (a larger picture), No. 95, he will see where their choice is alike.

I cannot but think it a misfortune that the Royal Academy is in possession of Thornhill's poor copies of the Cartoons; a misfortune that such misrepresentations of so great a master should be constantly before our students. But it rests with themselves to turn it to some account; for if they will make frequent visits to Hampton Court, and carry with them the recollection of the *poverty* of Thornhill, they will more highly estimate the *riches* of Raphael.

There is a great difference, not in degree, but in kind, between the natural, fresh, daylight of the Cartoons, and the heavy conventional colour of some of the large and late works of Raphael in the Louvre, such as the "Holy Family," in which the child is springing into his mother's arms from a cradle, and the "St. Michael piercing Satan." My belief is, that these pictures were never touched by him, and that he only furnished the Cartoons, probably in chalk, and without colour. If I recollect aright, they were painted for Francis I., who was perhaps content to have copies of designs of Raphael, by his pupils, as it must have been well known how much they painted for their

master in the Vatican. There is a repetition of the "St. Michael" in England (in the collection of Mr. Hope), which appears to me in all respects equal to the Louvre picture, and has every appearance of being by the same hand; and it is not conceivable that Raphael, overburthened as he was with employment from the Pope, could find time to make an exact copy of a large picture of his own.

The history of the Cartoons is unparalleled in the history of Art. Designed merely as patterns for the ornamental furniture of a chapel,*—these, I will not say *coarsely* painted (for Raphael could paint nothing coarsely), but *slightly* painted sheets of paper,—in a material precluding many of the most refined charms of Art, as well as many of the most beautiful truths of Nature, and with faults easily discoverable by the most uneducated eye,—rapidly planned and as rapidly executed,—these sheets of paper disprove, for once, a saying, true in most cases, that "pictures painted in a hurry may be seen in a hurry." It is not that they prove the insignificance of the things they want, but that they display the vast powers of him who, with means so insufficient, could bequeath to the world works unequalled in sublimity, excepting by others of his own hand, and by the hand of his great and only rival.

According to the account given of them in Felix Summerly's "Guide to Hampton Court," the series

* The circumstance of many parts being woven with gold and silver, shows how little the tapestries were considered as anything else than ornament.



ST. MICHAEL.—by RAPHAEL

of the Cartoons consisted of eleven. The death of the Pope before the tapestries were finished or paid for, prevented their return to Rome, and when the weavers had done with them they were thrown aside as waste paper, and "lay in a cellar, neglected, for a hundred years." The seven that escaped destruction were discovered in the time of Rubens, and, by his recommendation, purchased by Charles I., who seemed, however, only to consider them in the light of patterns for tapestry, of which he established a manufactory at Mortlake. Some of the hangings, probably woven there, are at Petworth, and one, "Elymas the Sorcerer," belongs to Hampton Court. But the Cartoons still remained in the condition in which they came to England, that is, cut in slips for the convenience of the weavers, when, at the death of Charles, they were purchased by Cromwell, "and hid in deal cases at Whitehall—at least they were so found after the Restoration. Charles II., with less feeling, sold them, rather underhandedly, to the French Minister Barillon, when Lord Danby upset the sale." They were for the first time put together, and placed, by William III., in their present home, a gallery built for them by Sir Christopher Wren, from which they were removed—to Buckingham House in 1776, and thence to Windsor in 1788. The rumour that the Queen Consort of George the Third wished to send them to Germany is probably one of the many falsehoods propagated respecting that lady.

But before we censure the indifference of former ages, by which they have so often been exposed to

destruction, we should do well to inquire how far they are, even now, secured as they should be, *in every possible way*, from the fate of their companions; for we are not to suppose because these seven have so often escaped, they "bear a charmed life." Their preservation is indeed a matter that requires the most serious consideration, for had they even been well engraved or copied, which they never have, their loss would be irreparable. Their removal from Hampton Court has been more than once suggested; and when the National Gallery was built, some artists urged the propriety of placing them in it; but this was wisely opposed by the late Mr. Seguier, on the ground that they would be soon blackened by the smoke of London, from which they could not be cleaned. The only risk of any kind to which they are exposed, where they are, is, however, an awful one. Were the room in which they hang to take fire, their destruction would be but the work of a few minutes; and were the palace to take fire, in a distant part, they could not be removed without certain, and probably great, injury,—for they are too large to pass through the doors or windows. It is frightful therefore to reflect that their present home is not fire-proof; though, on every other account, it is admirably calculated for their preservation.

I saw them, for the first time, forty-three years ago. Holloway was then engraving them, and the "Sacrifice at Lystra" was standing on the floor. It is the most injured, and my attention was particularly called to its state, and I cannot now detect in it the least change

for the worse, nor can I see any alteration in the others. Sir Christopher Wren has shown great judgement in building a room for them as far as he had space at his disposal. No doubt, had it been in his power, he would have made it long enough to admit them in one line opposite the windows, where they would all have received that equal reflected light that the five so placed do receive, and by which they are not only well seen, but less liable to fade than in a stronger light. The room, being to the north, is never invaded by the sun, and scarcely by flies, and those that do find their way to it remain at the windows, and whenever I have examined the Cartoons closely, I have been unable to detect fly marks on their surface. It is true they would be better seen somewhat lower, but not so well if they stood on the floor, and even then their high horizons would not be level with the spectator's eye. But, indeed, there is a paramount reason for their high situations, the necessity of their being above the reach of fingers.

It has been suggested, in case of their removal to London, that they should be covered with glass. This might preserve them from smoke, but it would very much hide them from sight. I have spent much time in this, of all the galleries in England the most interesting to an artist, and I can answer for the extreme care taken of the Cartoons by the gentleman who has charge of the state rooms of the Palace; and all that can be hoped is, that, if ever there should be a change in their locality, they may be placed where they will be as well cared for.

Their removal to London, it is to be hoped, will never again be thought of. But might not a fire-proof room, on the plan of their present one, as far as it is advantageous, be connected with the Palace that now holds them?

Although, at Hampton Court, there are a great number of mere furniture pictures, yet, independently of the Cartoons, the collection is interesting as containing a few of the remains of that splendid one formed by Charles I. Of these the Tintorets, the "Esther," and the "Muses," are the most important, and I know not that there are any other works of Tintoret in England equal to them. There are also some fine Bassans, though few of these are placed where they can be seen, and an excellent Palma, the "Shepherd's Offering." Of the pictures by Jan de Mabuse (James IV. of Scotland and his Queen), that of the king is the finest. The face of the king has been injured and repainted, but the rest of the picture is in a good condition, and the effect of the whole is surprisingly fresh and bright in colour.* The "Adoration of the

* Pilkington, who makes Jan de Mabuse too young to have painted them, is corrected by Bryant, who, no doubt, rightly dates his birth in or near the year in which Albert Durer was born. These pictures were, evidently, the wings or shutters to an altar-piece, probably destroyed during the Reformation in Scotland. On the reverse of the first is painted God supporting the body of Christ, and on the other a portrait of a middle-aged man kneeling, and behind him two angels, one of whom plays on an organ. The four pictures are not unworthy of Albert Durer himself; they require some little reparation, and are richly deserving of every possible care. They, as well as the little highly-finished, faded picture of three of the children

Magi," by Carlo Cagliari, is also a fine specimen of colour, and, being in a very good condition, I would strongly recommend it as a study, though it is not possible to see the entire picture from any one point, as it is placed opposite to the windows of the room. Indeed it is much to be regretted that the best pictures in this collection are, in but few instances, placed where they can well be seen, while so much space is occupied by large works of no interest or merit, such as the Sebastian, Riccis, and Kneller's equestrian picture of William III. Of the portraits, of which there are many good ones, I shall have occasion to speak in another section. A very interesting portion of the pictures collected by Charles I. is the series, in distemper, by Andrea Mantegna, representing a triumph of Julius Cæsar. Essentially opposed as their early and immature style is to that of Rubens, still their gaiety, and picturesque magnificence must have been very captivating to the great restorer of the Flemish school, as, on the most beautiful of the series, that where the elephants appear, he founded a rich composition, parts of which are strictly copied from Mantegna, while other parts are entirely his own. It is in the possession of Mr. Rogers.

of Henry VII., disprove, I think, the authenticity of the "Adam and Eve," and another picture at Hampton Court attributed to Jan de Mabuse.

SECTION XIV.

ON THE FLEMISH AND DUTCH PAINTERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BARRY nearly placed himself out of the pale of Art when he wrote—"Rubens, Rembrandt, Vandyke, Teniers, and Skalken, are without the pales of my church," because, whatever the deficiencies of the greatest of these painters, the mind that could be insensible to their merit must have a very limited perception of any of the excellences of Painting. The last name on the list forms an anti-climax that clearly proves how well Barry had kept his resolution of holding "no intercourse" with the others. Had he spent the time he wasted in transcribing Burke's "Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful," in rightly studying Rubens and Rembrandt, he would have discovered that all that is sublime and beautiful is not confined to the antique, or monopolized by the Italians, and his large canvasses in the Adelphi, might perhaps be regarded with more interest than they have ever excited.

Fuseli, a critic of a very different order, speaks of Rubens and Rembrandt as "meteors in Art." But, if their light was sudden in its appearance, it has been enduring in its influence. Rubens was the regenerator

of the Flemish school, of which the painters immediately preceding him had inflated themselves into absurdity, in the vain attempt to swell to the dimensions of Michael Angelo.

As a master, the honour of being the instructor of Vandyke would have been sufficiently great. But, to say nothing of his other scholars, among whom Diepenbeke and Snyders are conspicuous, he was the master of Watteau, born nearly half a century after his death, Hogarth owed much of the richness of his composition to him, and his instruction certainly reached to Reynolds and to Stothard; while all the landscape painters who succeeded him, in his own country, as well as all in England, down to the present time, are more or less indebted to him. We may cavil as we will at the faults of Rubens, and he had many, but we cannot refuse to bow in submissive homage before the great painter whose influence has been of such unceasing value for two hundred years.

If there were fewer pictures with his name, he would stand higher. To comprehend his excellence fully, we must study his studies, the small sketches and pictures which he placed in the hands of his assistants. The "Descent from the Cross" *was*, doubtless, all his own, though, unfortunately, it cannot now be called so; and we may feel tolerably sure that in the pictures in the National Gallery, that bear his name, we see the work of his own hand; most certainly in the "St. Bavon," and that inimitable sketch for the ceiling at Whitehall. Blenheim is rich in fine and entire works of Rubens, and, in the collection of the Marquis

of Westminster, the "Ixion and Juno" is assuredly one. But, in general, we can only be certain that we see his pencil in his portraits, his landscapes, and in such inimitable sketches as the "Venus and Mars" (though this is rather a finished picture than a sketch) in the collection of Mr. Rogers.

The greatest possible fullness and richness of composition, with the greatest possible unity, are among the peculiar characteristics of Rubens. His most crowded canvasses present an aspect as single in impression as the most simple pictures of Rembrandt; for there is not on their surfaces a touch of the pencil that has not reference to the whole, as strictly as it has to the smallest part. Hence, however complicated his compositions, it gives us no trouble to look at them, for the eye is never fatigued or bewildered in attempting to thread a maze through the intricacies of which *he* leads us.

When his want of taste in form is dwelt on, it must always be borne in mind that human form alone is meant. Of the beauty, the grandeur, the harmony of form in the abstract, he had the most perfect sense, whether of single objects, or the result of combination. Thus, the shapes of his masses of light and of dark, however simple or however complicated, are always impressive in the highest degree, and his pictures attract our admiration at a distance too great for us to distinguish the particulars of which they are made, and have in them that which would rivet the eye even were they placed upside down. This sense of beauty and grandeur of combination cannot be communicated; we can

only say that the gross figure of a Silenus, in the hands of Rubens (though we cannot say how it is done), is always made to contribute to the general beauty of the composition, while the contour of an Apollo may, if ill-combined with other forms, or injured by a bad choice of light and shadow, affect the eye disagreeably.

The capability of delineating forms of specific beauty is, comparatively, of easy acquirement, and there are probably few eyes that may not, by cultivation, attain the power of avoiding what is most offensive in accidental shapes. But to perceive at once, and be able to transfer to canvass, in their perfection, those beauties in which Nature leaves us a choice, as in the wreathing of smoke or the undulations of a flag, is the true test of a painter's taste in composition—a taste for which Rubens was pre-eminently distinguished. He is the master who most united richness and variety of ornament with Nature; and though imitated with more or less success by the Machinists of later times, yet the life and truth of his style will always keep him entirely distinct from that large class of painters.

It is not difficult to copy the general effect of a picture, the forms of its masses of light and of shade, or its arrangements of colours, at the same time varying all the materials that contribute to these, substituting, for instance, a light object for the light of a window, or a dark object for a shadow; or we may further disguise the theft of a general effect, by reversing or inverting it. We may thus get credit for what is not our own; but this will not in the least help us to the

power of originating a fine arrangement, without a sense of the one indispensable thing in a picture to which all minor beauties that would interfere with it are to be unhesitatingly sacrificed, however captivating in themselves; and which all the parts must co-operate to produce. Such a sense the best painters no doubt acquired by allowing their studies of Nature and of pictures to go hand in hand.

In another place, I have spoken of Rubens as the great master of action. In a few of his landscapes the sentiment is that of repose, but of his composition generally, movement is the principle; even in his architecture,—wherever he can do so with propriety,—he introduces shapes suggestive of motion, such as twisted pillars and serpentine forms. Fuseli describes the materials of his pictures as "swept along in a gulf of colours; as herbage, trees, and shrubs, are whirled, tossed, and absorbed, by an inundation." The stream of his light and shadow is, indeed, among his greatest charms. But it is incident to genius, so animated as his, to delight itself beyond bounds in what it can do best, and Rubens not only in some instances overstrains the action of his figures, but surfeits the eye with movement. There is a picture, entirely his own work, in the Louvre, "a rustic wedding," filled with figures dancing, romping, and rolling on the ground. Even those that sit and stand seem incapable of sitting or standing still. It is indeed a wonderful display of the most difficult attitudes mastered with consummate ease; but, were any similar subject by Teniers placed beside it, its utter



BATTLE OF THE AMAZONS—by Rubens

improbability with reference to Nature would at once appear.

Rubens threw out the conceptions of his magnificent mind with a liberality that distinguished him in all things. No mean or sordid man could have given the greatness which is stamped on his works; a greatness, however, that might have been combined with a purer taste, and the chief drawback from which is that indifference to the gross and the repulsive, characteristic of all the painters of the Low Countries of the age in which he lived. It is easy to avoid his faults, not so easy to attain his excellences.

Rembrandt was caricatured by Hogarth as debasing sacred things by low and ludicrous imagery, while the latest of his eulogists, Mr. Charles Blanc, considers him the most impressive of all the painters of religious subjects. But it is generally discovered, on becoming thoroughly acquainted with men, that the character of every individual has two sides, and so it is with the productions of genius. All the faults are to be found in Rembrandt that Hogarth pointed out; and the reason of his ridicule was this: The rage for purchasing at enormous prices the rare states of Rembrandt's etchings was at its greatest height in England, and Hogarth heard nothing from the lips of the buyers and sellers of these works but indiscriminate admiration of everything in them, while his own engravings, though bought by the public, were not considered by the connoisseurs worthy to lie in their portfolios with Rembrandt's, nor his pictures to hang with any of the great masters. It was natural, therefore, that Hogarth

should look but at the faulty side of Rembrandt, while Mr. Charles Blanc looks only at the other, and feels that the most touching incidents of the Gospel are treated by him with a pathos and unaffected simplicity, priceless in such subjects. He looks at Rembrandt's conception of Christianity as directing our attention to its peculiar beneficence to the miserable and the friendless of this world; gathering at the feet of its Divine Author the poor and the infirm, young and old, who there implore His healing power, or in patient confidence await it, or listen with reverent attention to His gracious words, while rich and well-fed rabbis stand by unmoved, or whisper to each other their contempt, or their surmises of diabolic agency. He does the fullest justice to Rembrandt's great powers, and sees not, or will not, notice his faults.

On the other hand, Dr. Kugler never alludes to the pathos of the "sturdy and gloomy republican" as he styles him. And in this passage and in others in which he speaks of his "dark feeling of dreamy power and subdued passion," and of the "gloomy character" of his mind, he confounds Rembrandt's admiration of the grandeur of shade and the breadth of nocturnal effects with metaphysical gloom. This is a great mistake. Instances might be cited of pictures exhibiting not only gloom, but wretchedness of mind in their authors, with very little of shade in their treatment.

To me, the prevailing tone of Rembrandt's mind, as shown in his Art, is serenity—as clearly as that of

Ráphael's is urbanity. Where the subject allows him, his natural disposition seems always tranquil; and though serious, yet the very reverse of gloomy. Gloom is restless;—it overspreads Salvator Rosa's Art as it does that of the schools in which he was reared. But Rembrandt, often solemn in the highest degree, and often in the highest degree pathetic, shows nothing of constitutional melancholy. He is the painter of repose, as Rubens is the painter of action; and in his portraits, as in those of Reynolds, the expression is most frequently that of calm thoughtfulness. Whatever else, therefore, there may be in common between the style of Rembrandt and that of Caravaggio or Spagnoletti, the gloomy, the melancholy, and the savage, are qualities it does not share with theirs. He delights in the stillness of night, but not as one who hates day; while Caravaggio delighted in turning day into night.

How far the style of Rembrandt grew out of that of the Italian *Naturalisti*, it grew, at any rate, into much greater importance, and became far more interesting; and this was the result not only of his superior taste in the imitation of Nature, but also, as I think, of his placid temperament. I know no work of his hand that strikes me as more entirely after his own heart than a night scene, an interior, in which a woman is reading by a light (which her person hides from the spectator) to an older woman, who has a spinning-wheel by her side and a cradle at her feet, in which an infant is sleeping. In description, all this sounds very ordinary; but the picture is one of

the most impressive that ever came from the hand even of Rembrandt. The window shutters are closed, the world is shut out, and it requires no stretch of imagination to suppose that the book with which both are engaged relates to a higher world,—a thought with which the image of the sleeping babe is in unison. But however we may read the picture, its effect is in the highest degree tranquillizing and soothing, and akin to that produced by Cowper's exquisite description of evening, beginning with—

"Let fall the curtains."*

A higher subject by his hand, and a much more solemn one, "Our Saviour and the two Disciples at Emmaus," possesses the same charm of the silence of night, broken by a gentle voice, which the painter makes almost audible. In such Art I fancy I see the real tone of Rembrandt's mind,—serious and meditative, but placid, and as far removed from gloom as the subjects of these pictures; and of all the portraits he has painted of himself this is the character; in the head, particularly, in Her Majesty's collection, a mind at peace with itself and with all the world, is charmingly expressed. His portrait of himself, lately added to the national collection, though it may be genuine, does not seem to me in any respect to do justice to his Art. A head stuck close against a wall is a very uncommon thing from a painter so fond of depth and space.

* This picture is in England, but I know not where.



REMBRANDT.

Photographed by Joseph Cundall.
168 New Bond Street.

Page 1838.

As I have endeavoured to rescue Rembrandt from what I consider the false impression—that his mind was a gloomy one, so I cannot but here notice other charges injurious to his memory. I have heard him stigmatized as "*a sot and a miser*," and, consequently, incapable of any refinement or elevation of sentiment.

The climate of Holland, and the habits of the age in which he lived, may account for, and in some degree excuse, his not being a water-drinker. Neither Addison nor Burns were water-drinkers, and yet the first wrote with refinement and the last with sublimity. Walpole said, coarsely, of Addison, that "he died maudlin," and with, perhaps, as much truth as that Rembrandt was a sot.

With respect to the more hateful charge that he was a miser, it may be noticed that among the very few things known of him, it is certain that about ten years before his death all he possessed was sold to satisfy the claims of a mortgage. Misers do not become bankrupts, and the inventory of his property shows that he possessed a very large collection of works of Art, comprising specimens of all the schools of Europe. He had also many objects of natural history—proving, if proof were needed, that, whatever might be his fondness for money, his love of Art and of Nature was greater. It is remarkable also, that between thirty and forty of his own pictures were on his hands, besides a far greater number of his sketches, which makes it probable that the patronage he received was not so constant as it has been represented; and the

sale which took place of his house and property may have given rise to the story of his pretending to be dead, in order that his works might be sold.

The inventory proves him to have been an admirer of styles very unlike his own, excepting in their excellence. He had some pictures by Raphael, as well as a large collection of engravings from his works, and also from those of Michael Angelo.

Men of great and original genius, who, like Rembrandt, have little of what is ordinarily called education, and who seem wayward in their tastes and habits, are sometimes looked upon as inspired idiots. But in the mind of such a man, the immense amount of knowledge accumulated by close and silent observation, knowledge of a kind not to be communicated by words, is something wholly inconceivable to the learned, merely in books; and if their reading has opened to them a world from which he is shut out, he also lives in a world of his own, equally interesting, the wisdom and enjoyment of which his pencil is constantly employed in communicating to all who have eyes for the sublime aspects of nature, and hearts fitted to receive such impressions through their eyes.

The very few sayings recorded of Rembrandt are remarkable for their mother wit and sound sense.

"On one occasion," says his pupil Hoogstraten, "when I was very troublesome to my master Rembrandt, by asking him too many questions respecting the causes of things, he replied very judiciously: 'Try to put well in practice what you already know, in so

doing you will, in good time, discover the hidden things which you now inquire about.' "—"A picture," he said, "is finished when the painter has done with it." And when the works of his latest and best practice in execution were examined too closely, and probably criticised as unfinished, he said his pictures "were not intended to be smelt, but looked at." He felt the restraint of what is considered superior society, and either avoided or stole from it on the first occasion; and, when asked his reason, replied,—"If I wish to relax from study, it is not honour, but liberty and ease that I seek."*

The etchings of Rembrandt, which have hitherto been as a sealed book to artists, on account of their costliness, are now placed within our reach by photography; and we are promised, by the publishers in Paris, the complete series of these inestimable works.

Fuseli says of Rembrandt that "he had no followers," by which he must mean that he had no successors equal, in all things, to himself. This, however, is only repeating what is true of every man of genius. Not to speak of the pupils who studied in his house, the entire Dutch school received from him, as the Flemish school had received from Rubens, a new and healthy impulse, which placed it high above its previous condition. His closest imitators—Bol, Flink, and, at a later period, Dietrich, were, as

* For these anecdotes I am indebted to Sir Charles Eastlake's "Materials for the History of Oil Painting," and Mr. Smith's "Catalogue Raisonné of the Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters."

respects all the great qualities of Art, the furthest removed from him;—and Gerard Dow, though often spoken of as the most distinguished of his scholars, had nothing in common with his greatness.

If "none knew like Rembrandt how to give importance to a trifle," Gerard Dow, on the other hand, turned the most important things into trifles. His mind was a very ingenious, and a very small one. By dint of extreme patience, under the guidance of a correct, but not a fine, eye, he produced works of a class, which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds says, are "looked at with admiration on the lips, and indifference in the heart." The finest picture I ever saw by him is that little one in the collection of Lord Ellesmere. It is his most direct and successful imitation of Rembrandt's early works; it has a delicacy of touch that is marvellous, and I like it the better for having little colour, for he was no colourist;—but while I am admiring it, I feel, as I do before the pictures of Wouvermans, that the artist has transported me to Lilliput.

Nicholas Maas was the one great painter among the immediate scholars of Rembrandt; for he alone comprehended the grandeur of his chiaroscuro, and, without attempting to reproduce his effects, found in Nature combinations for himself, to the power of seeing which, he was no doubt greatly helped by his master.

Lord Lindsay, in his "General Classification of Schools and Artists," speaks of the Ideal becoming extinct "in flowers and fruit, pots and pans." But they who appreciate the Dutch and Flemish schools

must feel that in the treatment, even of these things, there is an ideal or beautiful, as distinct from a literal imitation. The superiority of De Heem and Rachel Ruisch to Van Huysum in fruit and flowers, and of Teniers to Gerard Dow in pots and pans, and in these again the superiority of Nicholas Maas to Teniers, are matters of consequence to artists.

The works of Maas are remarkably few. It is said he was employed much on portraits, but they are not often to be met with. There are few pictures in our National Gallery before which I find myself more often standing than the very small one by him, the subject of which is the scraping a parsnip. A decent-looking Dutch housewife sits intently engaged in this operation, with a fine chubby child standing by her side watching the process, as children will stand and watch the most ordinary operations, with an intensity of interest as if the very existence of the whole world depended on the exact manner in which that parsnip was scraped. It is not the colour and light and shadow of this charming little gem, superlative as they are, that constitute its great attraction; for a mere outline of it would arrest attention among a thousand subjects of its class, and many pictures as beautiful in effect might not interest so much; but it is the delight at seeing a trait of childhood, we have often observed and been amused with in Nature, for the first time so felicitously given by Art. I have noticed the natural manner in which Raphael and other great painters represented children, as wholly uninterested in that which engages the attention of their elders. Here

the incident is exactly the reverse, and treated with equal felicity. The companion picture is rich in colour, but has not the interest of this; and there is another fine picture by Maas, in the National Gallery, a maid sleeping over her work in a scullery, the foreground of which is, however, somewhat rubbed; but a picture in Her Majesty's collection exhibits the summit of his power in colour and chiaroscuro.

Of all the Dutch painters of familiar life, Jan Steen is acknowledged to be the greatest genius. The humour and whim in his compositions disclose to us a mind quite distinct from the rest; and the love of childhood displayed in his works, shows that with all his eccentricities there was something good in his nature; and, indeed, unless that be the case, I doubt the power of any artist, whatever may be his genius, to interest us deeply. I know not that any other painter combines such completion of finish at so apparently small an expense of labour as Jan Steen, in his best pictures. But haste, perhaps occasioned by his necessities, towards the close of his life, made him throw off works which, though they might have made the reputation of other men, are scarcely worthy of him. His pictures have, more than those of most painters, an apparent artlessness of contrivance,—the result not of ignorance, but of that originality which, disregarding common rules, works out its purposes by methods of its own, and yet faultlessly. Jan Steen seems, indeed, from the unmistakable evidences of rapidity his works present, to have had the whole of his art, not only always present in his mind, but at his fingers' ends.



REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN LIFE—by Jan Steen

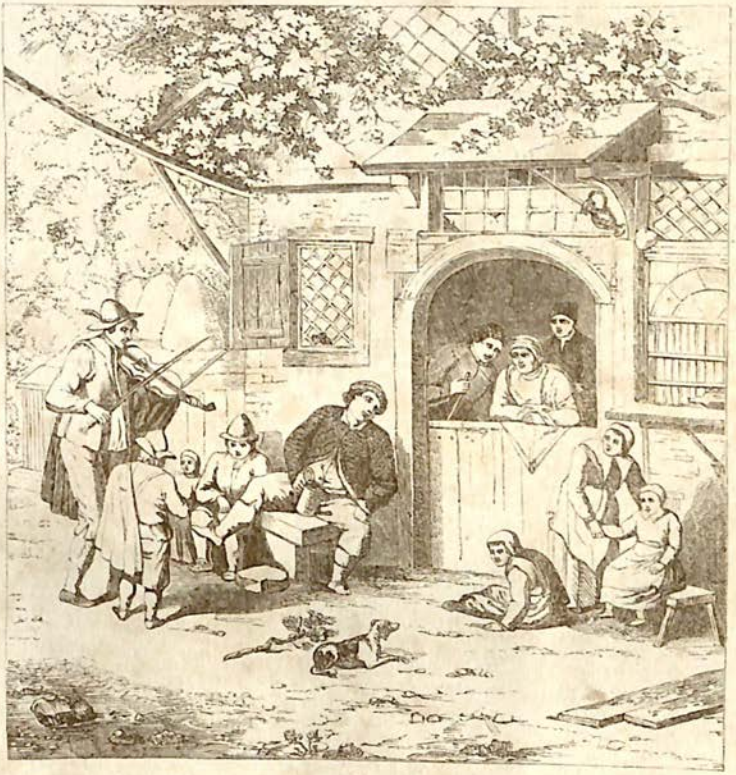
He seems to have painted as quickly and as surely as Shakespear is said to have written. Others have, no doubt, equalled him in this, but who with such results? —excepting only a still greater genius—Rubens.

Slight in execution as are some of his late works, there are early pictures by him, and some of these are in Her Majesty's collection, as highly finished as the most elaborate of Gerard Dow, and with a much finer taste. The excellence of his colour has been pointed out by Reynolds; but there is one point in which he as well as the other Dutch painters are the best possible guides. Mr. Ruskin has noticed that "modern painters in general have not a proper sense of the value of dirt; cottage children never appear but in freshly got-up caps and aprons, and white-handed beggars excite compassion in unexceptionable rags." Now it is very easy to make everything look dirty, and there are styles of bad colouring that cannot avoid doing so, and in which Venus herself, rising from the sea, will seem to stand in need of washing. But it is no paradox to say that even *dirt* should not be painted *to look dirty*, and this is exactly what colourists like Jan Steen understood. Hence their pictures, even when their subjects are from the lowest condition of humanity, are not, in respect to colour, repulsive, however so in their incidents; but, without anything of that clean look in the dresses, persons, and furniture, of their pictures, that would be out of character, and also without the monotony or wretchedness of dirty colour, their negative hues, which fill their largest masses, are here and there contrasted by small

portions of red, orange, or other bright colours, that, so surrounded, glow like gems.

How they managed this I do not know; I can only point out the result, which is one of the charms of Ostade, who, more than any other painter, resembles Rembrandt, in his *admiration* (for so it seems) of human ugliness and deformity, and who *often*, as Rembrandt *sometimes* did, carries us into scenes which we would not willingly enter in real life, but which he adorns with all the charms of Art, and often with traits of domestic interest, by which he penetrates to the heart, to where the tedious mechanism of Gerard Dow never yet reached. The hard-working and, therefore, prematurely old-looking parents, caressing their old-looking children with that natural simplicity which this perfect master of expression felt so truly; the relish of their enjoyments increased by their fewness; are, I confess, far more to my taste than the cottage incidents of many other painters, who, more ambitious of story, aim to be sentimental; and though such painters avoid all that is objectionable in Ostade, and take care to give beauty enough, yet, like Greuze, for instance, the best of the class of which I am speaking, they carry the mind more into the theatre than into rustic life.

The excellence of Art consists in what it is not, as well as in what it is; and, to me, a great merit of the Flemish and Dutch painters is the absence of all affected and mawkish sensibility — all that stage trickery of the spectator by which he is made to believe himself touched at heart. This false senti



THE ITINERANT FIDDLER—by Adrian van Ostade.

ment began with Greuze, and has ever since more or less infected modern Art. There is an engraving by Le Bas, from Teniers, entitled the "Miseries of War." It represents the outrages committed in a small village by a band of soldiers. Yet no woeful maiden, with hair dishevelled, throws herself on the body of her murdered lover, in an attitude as carefully arranged to display the charms of her person as her grief. Instead of this, a plain countrywoman intercedes for the life of an old peasant, and some soldiers are binding the arms of the village priest, who stands in patient submission, with his eyes raised to Heaven. There are other incidents, all the more touching for an entire absence of theatrical, or modern pictorial effect; and, like all the out-door scenes of Teniers, it has a very fine sky.

If painters are to be classed by their subjects, the lowest of all would be two of the rarest excellence, Terburg and Metsu. It is true they avoided poverty and ugliness, but their pictures, and especially Terburg's, are often mere exhibitions of vice, with nothing of the gaiety of Jan Steen, or those touches of humorous satire that he, though by no means a rigid moralist, seldom failed to throw into such scenes. Terburg's soldiers carouse without merriment, and his notion of love may be seen in an exquisitely-painted picture, in the Louvre, in which a handsome woman carefully counts, with her eyes, a handful of money offered to her by a middle-aged cavalier; and he sometimes descends so low as to show us a well-dressed woman tippling by herself, with a glass raised

to her lips and a stone jug in her lap. If such pictures are without the satire of Hogarth, they have an unintentional moral in their sordid, matter-of-fact treatment, their utter want of any refinement of sentiment; and while their perfection recommends them to the eye, they have nothing that can corrupt the mind, but everything that is repulsive to it. Though there is seldom much of animated expression in the pictures of Terburg and Metsu, it is not because they had not the power of giving it. Their expression is always perfect; and in the collection of Mr. Hope there is a picture by the latter in which he rises far above the ordinary interest of his subjects.—A beautiful woman is pouring out her very soul on paper, and so entirely absorbed as to be unconscious that every word she is writing is read by him who, it is plain, from his indignation, is the person of all others from whom she would conceal it. He has stolen behind her on tiptoe, carefully holding his sword close to his side, that she may not hear him. A story of love and jealousy could not be better, and has rarely been so well, told.

The subjects of these two painters, when they rose above those scenes in which vice is a matter of traffic, are either card or music parties, or music lessons. In Her Majesty's collection are fine specimens of both, "the blue boddice" being the very finest picture by Terburg I ever saw—a work which, had he painted nothing else, would have placed him at the top of the Art.

The materials offered by Terburg and Metsu to the



THE SATIN GOWN—by Gerard Terborg.

eye are admirably suited to a display of colour and execution. Petticoats of the costliest satins, bordered with silver; jackets of the richest velvets, trimmed with ermine; polished cuirasses; embroidered sword belts; the most picturesque of boots and of slouched hats; tables covered with Persian carpets; richly-ornamented silver dishes and tankards; projecting chimneys of variegated marbles; and all relieved from backgrounds of dark tapestries, and presented to us with a delicacy of finish sometimes equal to Van Eyck, but with the addition of a suavity of manner unknown to the early Art of any country, first adopted, from Nature, by Correggio, and from him introduced by Rubens and Rembrandt into their schools.

When speaking of colour, I have spoken of De Hooge. But I must here say something more of this original painter; perhaps, with the exception of Rembrandt, the most original of the Dutch school. Scarcely anything is known of his history; but he seems from the very commencement of his studies to have aimed at a single object, to which throughout his life he never ceased to devote himself, till at last he succeeded in it beyond any other painter, unless it be Claude. This object was to express light. For the subjects of his early pictures he chose interiors, generally filled with music parties, and all within the apartment was subdued to a very low and cool tone, for the sole purpose of giving splendour to gleams of sunshine seen through windows or doors. But, as he advanced, he acquired the superior power of spreading light throughout his compositions with-

out interfering with the brilliancy of its source. He painted the effects of sunbeams upon walls with a truth and a taste unequalled before or after him; and the out-door scenes of his best time have a luminous quality which he did not acquire by studying pictures, but with which he was at last rewarded for his close observation of tones in Nature to which ordinary eyes are sealed. A picture, formerly in the possession of Mr. Wells, in which a man sits, drinking, in the open air, while a woman stands near him, and a little girl at a short distance, is a fine specimen of his best period, and so is one, much like it in subject, in the collection of Lady Peel. The finest of his interiors that I have seen is, "The Card Players," in Her Majesty's collection, of which I attempted a description in the Section on Colour.

Italy is sometimes called "the land of poetry;" but Nature impresses the varied sentiment of her varying moods as eloquently on flat meadows and straight canals, as on mountains, valleys, and winding streams; and visits the mill and the cottage with the same splendid phenomena of light and shadow as she does the palace. This was well understood by Cuyp and Ruysdael, and their most impressive pictures are often made out of the fewest and the simplest materials.

There is a small "Sunset" by Cuyp in the Dulwich collection. It has not a tree, except in the extreme distance, nor scarcely a bush, but it has one of the finest skies ever painted, and this is enough, for its glow pervades the whole, giving the greatest value to the exqui

sitely-arranged colour of a near group of cattle,—bathing the still water and distance in a flood of mellow light, and turning into golden ornaments a very few scattered weeds and brambles that rise here and there from the broadly-shadowed foreground into the sunshine, gaining great importance from their nearness to the eye.

In the hands of Ruysdael, a windmill and a stunted tree or two are sufficient, under the effects with which he envelopes them, to impress us infinitely beyond anything that can be effected by an ordinary painter, with the most magnificent materials of Alpine scenery. Solemnity is the charm of his pictures;—tranquil and soothing, it never, with him, degenerates into melancholy. Though I know no work of his hand that does not command admiration, I like him best in the flat and open scenery of his own country, or of the sea that washes its shores, where he shows himself by far the greatest of all the marine painters of his time.

Of the younger Teniers, whose landscape compositions are incomparably his best works, there are admirable specimens at Dulwich, and one very fine one in the collection of the Marquis of Westminster. The power of giving importance to trifles, which Fuseli ascribes to Rembrandt, who, as he said, "could pluck a flower in every desert," is shared with him by those of whom I have been speaking, and "we derive," as Constable said, "the pleasure of surprise from the works of the best Dutch painters in finding how much interest the Art, when in perfection, can give to the most ordinary subjects."

The wealthy Burgomasters of the period under notice, appear to have been liberal patrons of Art, but they were not infallible judges; for neither Cuyp nor Ruysdael were appreciated while they lived. With respect to Cuyp, we learn from Mr. Smith the astounding fact, that "by a reference to numerous Dutch catalogues of the principal collections sold in Holland, down to 1750 there is no example of any picture by his hand selling for more than thirty florins, or something less than three pounds sterling!" The heartless mannerisms of Bergham and Both, which represent neither Dutch nor Italian Art, being hybrid mixtures of the two, were in greater request, and are still more valued than they deserve to be; while, among the painters of familiar life, Dow and Mieris seem to have been more popular than Ostade, Terburg, Metsu, De Hooge, or Nicholas Maas; and, in subjects of a higher class than theirs, Vanderwerf gained a reputation which has long ceased to connect itself with his pictures. With respect to him, it is clear that, even to the time of Reynolds, his name was one of importance, or Sir Joshua would not have devoted so large a space in his "Journey through Flanders and Holland" to an exposure of the vices of his style; whose remarks on Vanderwerf I would recommend to the careful perusal of the student, for a clear explanation of important principles of Nature that should never be, but often are, lost sight of.

In this brief sketch of the Flemish and Dutch schools, I have been obliged to omit any mention of some painters of first-rate excellence in their several

branches of Art. I have not space to say anything of Paul Potter, Emanuel De Witt, William Vandervelde, Louis Vadder (who visited Italy to much better purpose than Both or Bergham), Arnold Vanderneer, and others, if of less note, yet not, therefore, *noteless*.

SECTION XV.

ON LANDSCAPE.

Our intellectual tastes should elevate and purify our natures; but, in some directions, they are not inapt to degenerate into mere luxurious indulgences, and a long catalogue might be made out of gross and selfish men, who have yet been patrons of Art. But the love of Landscape is a love so pure, that it can never associate with the relishes of a mere voluptuary, and wherever such a love is native, it is the certain indication of a superior mind. Shakespear sends us to find

> ——" tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Tongues and books that never lie,—sermons direct to the heart,—and good unmixed with evil; and the man must be hopelessly wicked, or wofully blinded by passion, who can plan or commit a wrong act while these are addressing him.

How fine a scene is that in " The Antiquary," where

Edie Ochiltree tries to prevent the duel between Lovel and M'Intyre. "'What are you come here for, young men?' he said; 'are you come among the most lovely works of God to break His laws? Have you left the works of man, the houses and the cities, that are but clay and dust, like those that built them; and are ye come here among the peaceful hills, and by the quiet waters, that will last whiles aught earthly shall endure, to destroy each other's lives?'"

Such is the moral influence of Landscape, to which no great painter was ever indifferent; nor can we imagine any painter indifferent to its material beauty. And yet Leonardo da Vinci tells us that his friend Boticello "had a particular pique against landscapes, and thought them much beneath his application; the effect of which was, that being a very sorry landscape painter, his merit in other matters was less regarded. It was a saying of his, that a palette full of colours being thrown against the wall would leave a stain behind it properly enough representing a landscape."

Leonardo prefaces this account by remarking that "a painter who is not equally pleased with all parts of his art, will never become universal." And I will add that even a painter who should confine himself to in-door subjects, cannot represent an open window truly without some practical knowledge of landscape; and the greatest historical and portrait painters have invariably studied it, not from pictures only, but from the reality. Titian seems to have done that for inanimate nature which Michael Angelo did for human

form, in giving to it a grandeur unknown before in Art; and the background of the "Peter Martyr" has been considered to mark an important epoch in the history of landscape, being equally admirable for its greatness and its finish.

The right appreciation of this lovely branch of Painting has suffered, like all the others, by classification. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who does justice to the genius of Gainsborough, refuses to rank his landscape with poetic Art, and this could only arise from its not being connected, like the landscape of Poussin and Sebastian Bourdon, with classic incident; for if Burns, in describing the banks of the Doon, writes as a poet, why may not Gainsborough, with his extreme sensibility to every beauty of Nature, paint like one, though he take for his subject the most familiar scenery of his own country?—I should say that if ever landscape was poetic on canvass, it is such landscape as his. Constable, in speaking of one of his pictures, a work almost without details, said, "I cannot think of it even now without tears in my eyes;—with particulars he had nothing to do, his object was to deliver a fine sentiment, and he has fully accomplished it."

I can understand that a taste requiring a literal completion of particulars will never be satisfied with Gainsborough. Indeed, those who feel what he accomplished, must often be content, like Cordelia, to "love and be silent;" cavils, they will find themselves unable to answer, will not disturb their enjoyment—an enjoyment they cannot make intelligible to minds not constituted or trained to receive it, however they

may feel sure that it is based on a genuine love of Nature.

The faults of the highest Art may be easily and clearly described by words; but there are literally *no words* for its most refined beauties, nor are there any words to express the want of those beauties in Art that has all the ordinary appearances of truth. Hence those plausible styles, that form the staple of our exhibitions, and that fill our print-shop windows, are safe from criticism and easily extolled; and the advantages to be derived from language being on the side of inferior Art, nothing has been more common than for great artists to be talked down and indifferent ones talked up. Hogarth was talked down, and Penny, a now forgotten painter, talked up by no less a critic than Barry. Wilson and Gainsborough were talked down, while Smith, of Chichester, and Barrett were talked up. Stothard, Flaxman, and Constable suffered, when living, the same kind of depreciation, while lesser artists were praised and patronised;—and Turner, when in the meridian of his glory, was ridiculed without mercy by the fashionable leaders of taste.

Rocks, trees, mountains, plains, and waters are the features of landscape, but its expression is from above; and it is scarcely metaphorical to say Nature smiles, or weeps, and is tranquil, sad, or disturbed with rage, as the atmosphere affects her. Hence the paramount importance of the sky in landscape,—an importance not diminished, even when it forms but a small portion of the composition.

"There is not a moment of any day of our lives," says Mr. Ruskin, "when Nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them; he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them: but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not

"'Too bright nor good
For human nature's daily food;'

it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust."

And yet many are the landscape painters who seem, in their studies from Nature, as if they had never raised their eyes above the horizon; and among the proofs of the indifference of those who interest themselves in Art to the beauty that canopies the earth, may be noticed that, although the composition, and light, and shade of clouds are as much within the reach of the photographic art as any of the other great things of Nature, they are her only beauties it has hitherto entirely neglected. I have seen but two calotypes of skies, and these (taken by my friend, Mr. Thurston Thompson,) prove that it is from no want

of power in the process that skies are not as common in our photographic exhibitions as any other subjects.

Turner's transcendant power of expressing atmospheric phenomena more than atoned for eccentricities that would have ruined a lesser man: and Constable spent entire summers in painting skies from Nature. In a letter to a friend dated October, 1821, he says:—"I have done a good deal of skying, for I am determined to conquer all difficulties, and that among the rest. That landscape painter who does not make his sky a very material part of his composition, neglects to avail himself of one of his greatest aids. I have often been advised to consider my sky as 'a white sheet thrown behind the objects!' Certainly, if the sky is obtrusive, as mine are, it is bad; but if it is evaded, as mine are not, it is worse; it must, and always shall, with me, make an effectual part of the composition. It will be difficult to name a class of landscape in which the sky is not the key-note, the standard of scale, and the chief organ of sentiment. You may conceive, then, what a 'white sheet' would do for me, impressed as I am with these notions,—and they cannot be erroneous. The sky is the source of light in Nature, and governs everything; even our common observations on the weather of every day are altogether suggested by it. The difficulty of skies in painting is very great, both as to composition and execution; because, with all their brilliancy, they ought not to come forward, or, indeed, be hardly thought of, any more than extreme distances are; but this does not apply to

phenomena, or accidental effects of sky, because they always attract particularly. I may say all this to you, though *you* do not want to be told that I know very well what I am about; and that my skies have not been neglected though they have often failed in execution, no doubt from an over anxiety about them; which will alone destroy that easy appearance which Nature always has in all her movements."

The studies Constable made of skies were in oil, on large sheets of stiff paper, and o n e back of every one are memoranda, of the date, the time of day, the direction of the wind, and other remarks; for instance:— "Sept. 6th, 1822, looking S.E.; 12 to 1 o'clock, fresh and bright, between showers; much the look of rain all the morning, but very fine and grand all the afternoon and evening."

There are beautiful celestial phenomena not yet made tributary to Art; the lunar rainbow, for instance, and the aurora-borealis. They are, perhaps, too rarely seen to be understood by the general eye; and so it is with the ocean, the deep blue of which in fine weather, approaching to black in storms, has never been painted, marine subjects having hitherto been taken from the narrow seas only; and even in these the splendid phosphorescent light seen in the foam of the waves at night has not been attempted. There is also a beautiful appearance in calm weather, when large masses of bright clouds are reflected in broad columns of light on the sea, just as the sun throws his pillar of fire below him. I may be mistaken, but I cannot recollect this in a picture, constant as its ap-

pearance is in Nature, and familiar as it must be to every eye. The truth is, we go on painting the things that others and ourselves have painted before, and do not look out of the Art nearly so much as we should do. Now and then an original painter adds something new and beautiful, but the most original might be more so, were it not for that natural indolence that makes even such too easily content to rest in what has been done.

As I cannot hope to add anything of value to the much that has been said of the great landscape painters among the old masters, and as genuine landscape has, for the last century or more, existed only in England, I will confine my observations to some of the principal landscape painters of the British school.

Wilson should have been mentioned before Gainsborough, as he was born first. This charming artist began with portrait, in which he was not successful, and which he quitted for landscape in which he was not successful either, in a worldly point of view, though eminently so for the benefit of the world. In truth and beauty of colour, and in his perception of the greatness and breadth of Nature, he has never been surpassed, and only equalled by the greatest painters. His own mind is probably best seen in his calm and lovely sunsets, and yet storms were never more terrifically painted than by him.

That Sir Joshua Reynolds did not consider the mere addition of classic incident as constituting the poetry of landscape is clear from his remarks on the "Niobe" of Wilson; though he, no doubt, thought

it essential to the making landscape poetic. With respect to the "Niobe," I think, with Sir Joshua, that the introduction of the figure of Apollo is worse than useless. As an awful representation of a storm the picture is perfect, and the catastrophe would be more affecting, because our sense of its reality would be uninterrupted, were it caused only by the flash of lightning. As Sir Joshua says, this is the first impression,—an impression which is distracted by the appearance of Apollo on a strip of cloud. I am inclined to think the mistake of this introduction originated in the desire of poor Wilson to draw attention to his neglected Art, by making it what the taste of the times would consider *classic*.

Fuseli says of Wilson, "though in effects of dewy freshness and silent evening lights few equalled, and fewer excelled him, his grandeur is oftener allied to terror, bustle, and convulsion than to calmness and tranquillity." In the first half of this passage every lover of Wilson will agree, while the last expresses nothing more than an objection to his choosing sometimes to paint storms, applied to which the epithets of Fuseli are praise, rather than censure.

The next in chronological order of the British school who deserves to be called a great landscape painter, and he well deserves it, is John Cozens. But his works, consisting of drawings in water colours only, are confined to the portfolios of a few collectors, and so little, therefore, is he known, that even some artists of the present generation have never seen a landscape by his hand. Neither is there much known of his

personal history; but his Art made such an impression on Constable, that in a moment of enthusiastic admiration he pronounced John Cozens to be "*the greatest genius that ever touched landscape.*" However we may be inclined to deduct from such an estimate, which may be considered as a mode of conveying a very high opinion rather than a deliberate verdict, we must suppose the possession of extraordinary powers by one who could be so characterised, even without due reflection; and indeed I should doubt my own judgment, rather than doubt the existence of great excellence when noticed in such a manner by Constable, though I were unable to perceive it myself.

"Cozens," said Constable, "is all poetry." But it is poetry that wins gently and imperceptibly. So modest and unobtrusive are the beauties of his drawings, that you might pass them without notice, for the painter himself never says "look at this or that," he trusts implicitly to your own taste and feeling; and his works are full of half-concealed beauties, such as Nature herself shows but coyly, and these are often the most fleeting appearances of light. Not that his style is without emphasis, for then it would be insipid, which it never is, nor ever in the least common-place. Constable's great admiration of him breaks out in many passages in his letters. At one time he speaks of drawings by Cozens keeping him cheerful; and again he says, "in the room where I am writing there are hanging up two beautiful small drawings by Cozens; one a wood, close and very solemn, the other a view from Vesuvius, looking over Portici, very lovely."



COZENS.

This exquisite artist had an eye equally adapted to the grandeur, the elegance, and the simplicity, of Nature; but he loved best not her most gorgeous language, but her gentlest, her most silent eloquence. The accompanying beautiful engraving will speak for itself. It is, I believe, the first ever made from him, and I much regret it could not be on a larger scale.

He exhibited but once only at the Academy, in 1776, "A Landscape, with Hannibal in his March over the Alps, showing to his Army the fertile Plains of Italy." This, I have heard, was an oil picture, and so fine that Turner spoke of it as a work from which he learned more than from anything he had then seen.

Cozens travelled in Italy with a gentleman who kept him in constant employment; hence most of his subjects are Italian, but I have seen some noble drawings by him from Windsor Park. Sad to say, the last years of his short life were passed in a state of mental derangement; and some of his works are so inferior to his best, as to make it not improbable they were done when his mind was giving way. In these, that pensive tenderness, which forms the charm of his evening scenes, sinks into cheerless melancholy.

From his surviving relations I have been favoured with a few particulars relating to him, which I am sure will be read with interest by all who know his works.

His father, Alexander Cozens, was born in Russia. He was a natural son of Peter the Great, his mother being an English woman, whom the Czar took home with him from Deptford, and by whom he had another

son, who became a general in the Russian service. The emperor sent Alexander Cozens to Italy to study painting, from whence he came to England in 1746, where his son John was born in 1752. I have seen a very small pen-drawing of three figures, on which is written, "done by J. Cozens, 1761, when nine years old." I have also seen a book of views in Italy, drawn in pencil, some finished with a pen, and others half finished, in the manner of line engraving, in which is pasted the following memorandum: — "Alexander Cozens, in London, author of these drawings, lost them, and many more, in Germany, by their dropping from his saddle when he was riding on his way from Rome to England, in the year 1746. John Cozens, his son, being at Florence in the year 1776, purchased them. When he returned to London, in the year 1779, he delivered the drawings to his father."

There is much of elegance, and feeling of the beautiful forms of Nature, in these drawings of Alexander Cozens. He practised as a teacher of figures as well as of landscape, and published a drawing-book of the figure engraved by Bartolozzi. I have seen a miniature of John Cozens, in which he appears a beautiful boy of fifteen or sixteen, of a fair complexion, and with a quantity of light hair falling in curls over his shoulders, and also a portrait of him by Pine, of the size of life, and apparently when he was about thirty years old; a handsome, thoughtful, pale-face, certainly bearing a resemblance to the Emperor Alexander, as he looked when I saw him in England. The death of John Cozens is stated in Bryan's Dictionary as occurring in 1799,

but by Constable, I know not on what authority, in 1796.

Bryan says of him, that "he produced some drawings of extraordinary merit, executed in a style which was afterwards adopted and improved by the ingenious Mr. Girtin." And this leads us to the next great landscape-painter of our school. The style of Thomas Girtin is not, however, an improvement, for there could be none on Cozens, when at his best; but it may be called a style of more equally-sustained excellence, as the short life of Girtin was exempt from the malady that clouded the closing years of Cozens.

Sobered tints of exquisite truth, and broad chiaro-scuro, are the prevailing characteristics of Girtin. However he may differ from Cozens, he loved, like him, the repose of Nature; and with this feeling he painted many of the cathedrals of England in solemn evening effects, and occasionally in the still sunshine of noon. In the year before his death, he sketched twenty views in Paris, in a style of great elegance, breadth, and simplicity, which he etched himself, and the plates were finished in Aqua-tint, by other artists. He painted a panorama of London, and it is to be lamented that any portion of so valuable and brief a life should have been wasted on a work the enjoyment of which was so transient. His constitution was extremely delicate, and he died in 1802, of pulmonary consumption, at the age of twenty-seven. His devotion to Art was extreme, and he continued to draw till within a few days of his death, though he was so debilitated that he could scarcely hold his pencil; and

it is marvellous that in so short an existence, and with so feeble a constitution, he should have achieved so much. The truth and taste with which he coloured is not more remarkable than the facility of his handling. My friend, Mr. F. C. Lewis, who often saw him at work, speaks of the "sword play of his pencil," as something wonderful; and, indeed, every drawing by him, with which I am acquainted, bears evidence of this. He is described by all who remember him, as a youth of a noble, generous, unselfish nature, with little consciousness of his own great merit. "He was careful," it is said, "in making his drawings, but careless of them when made." The engraving here introduced is from one of exceeding beauty, probably the result of a visit he is known to have paid to the lakes of Scotland. Engravings from Cozens and Girtin are given because they are, of all the eminent landscape-painters of the last age, the least known. The two I have next to speak of, the two greatest of the first half of the present century, do not require such illustrations.

Turner began with water colours; a mode of painting which he practised at later periods of his life with wonderful power. In his earliest works a resemblance may be noticed to Cozens (to whom he always acknowledged great obligations), and still more to Girtin, but with inferior power to either. Contemporary with both, and of about the same age with Girtin, had Turner died as young, his name would only have survived as that of a second-rate painter. His genius was of later development, and first appeared in those grand, classic,



and marine subjects which he painted in the early part of the century. The sea pieces were his own; the others were made up from various sources in Art, and though noble works, yet not generally those on which his fame will ultimately rest. His Snowstorm in the Alps, however, with Hannibal and his Army, would alone justify the highest praises of his friends, and his "Ulysses," painted at a much later period, is a poem of matchless splendour and beauty. Among the great multitude of his conceptions, there may be doubtless other classical subjects equal to those direct from Nature, but they are exceptions to the rule by which he will be judged.

I was equally delighted and surprised when I heard that a very young man had come forward, with extraordinary ability, and knowledge and love of Nature, as the champion of Turner, at a time when (excepting by painters) his transcendent powers were little felt or understood. But I own I was disappointed when I read Mr. Ruskin's "Modern Painters," at one of the modes he adopted in the vindication of the great artist's just claim to admiration.

There is little enough of excellence in the world, and its appreciation is always in danger from the obtrusion of clever mediocrity, and that direction of criticism, with whatever ability it is conducted, is unfortunate, that tends to obscure any of the true lights in Art, in order that one great luminary may shine the more brilliantly. I think, therefore, it was equally unnecessary and unsafe to the reputation of Turner to assume that he had fewer faults than other great painters, and to contrast

his beauties with the faults, often indeed imaginary, of Claude, the Poussins, Cuyp, or Canaletti; unnecessary, because his excellences are of so high an order, that his greatest admirers may fearlessly acknowledge all the defects with which he may be charged; and unsafe, because such a system of comparison might be more easily turned against him than against any painter that ever lived; for there never lived one in whose works greater absurdities or a larger number of impossible effects might be pointed out. Then, again, the assumption that other great painters are inferior to him because they have not done the same beautiful things, is unfair. Mr. Ruskin describes in his own vivid manner four or five skies by Turner, and at the close of every such eloquent passage, asks triumphantly, "*has Claude given this?*" Now it would be quite as easy to select from the works either of Claude, the Poussins, of Wilson, of Cuyp, of Ruysdael, and even of Canaletti, passages of peculiar beauty, and to ask, with as little chance of an affirmative reply, "*has Turner given this?*"

I have said that the faults Mr. Ruskin finds in the old masters are often imaginary; and in proof of this, let us examine his remarks on the picture in the National Gallery, by Nicola Poussin, called "Phocian." Mr. Ruskin says, "The first idea we receive from this picture is, that it is evening, and all the light coming from the horizon: not so; it is full noon, the light coming steep from the left, as is shown by the shadow of the stick on the right hand pedestal; for if the sun were not very high, that shadow could not lose itself half

way down, and if it were not lateral, the shadow would slope, instead of being vertical." Now the fact is, that if the sun were very high, the shadow of the stick would be continued instead of losing itself, and the effect in the picture is in reality in accordance with the more softened light of the sun when near the horizon, while the shadow of the man's head near the stick, is placed exactly where an evening sun would cast it. It is true these shadows are thrown laterally into the picture; but this is quite consistent with as much of warm light as Poussin has shown in the horizon, and the contradiction of effects imagined by Mr. Ruskin has no existence; while, were it worth while to look for blunders in Turner, we might notice that palpable one in the "Dido building Carthage," of a shadow from a beam of wood projecting from the brick wall on the extreme left of the spectator, in a direction which can only come from a sun much higher than that in the picture. Another instance of the detection of a supposed falsehood by Mr. Ruskin, in a great painter, but which in fact is a truth, occurs in his description of Canaletti's manner of treating water. After describing, with much severity, the ripples in the open part of a canal, he says (and in the way of censure), that, "three hundred yards away, all the houses are reflected as clear and as sharp as in a quiet lake." And most assuredly they are, because Canaletti painted what he saw, and the water as it approached the houses, being sheltered by them from the breeze that occasions the ripple in the middle of the canal, was there as calm as "a quiet lake." The reader will see a fine example of such

treatment in the large Canaletti in the National Gallery. Mr. Ruskin is right in his censure of the manner, as too mechanical, in which the ripples are painted by Canaletti, a censure that applies to his execution generally; still the effect in Nature he meant to express is given, and his colour is always relatively true and well selected, though in a subdued scale; and however below Turner, Canaletti cannot be spared from the list of great painters: and in proof that Turner is at least as vulnerable, I would notice that, among the impossibilities in his pictures, we often find reflections on the uneven surfaces of large waves exactly perpendicular to the object reflected, and as they could only be seen on calm water.

Mr. Ruskin, I know, will agree with me in considering it unfortunate for Turner that his picture of "Dido building Carthage" is placed, in the National Gallery, beside Claude's "Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba;" for his notice of the two pictures of Carthage is among the few instances in which he admits a fault in Turner. "The foreground," he says, "of the 'Building of Carthage,' and the greater part of the architecture of the Fall, are equally heavy and evidently paint, if we compare them with genuine passages of Claude's sunshine." For my own part, when I look at the "Building of Carthage" I feel as if I were in a theatre, decorated with the most splendid of drop-scenes, but when I stand before Claude's "Embarkation" I am in the open air enjoying the sea breeze, and listening to the plash of the waves on the beach. Yet this does not convince me that Claude was a greater man than Turner, because

it is a comparison of one of the most artificial pictures of the English painter, with one of the most natural works of the Frenchman; and I only make the comparison to show that Claude is not to be deposed, to place on his throne one who wants it not, because he has raised himself to a throne, unoccupied before, and from which his sway is extended over a wider dominion, though, for that very reason, with less absolute power in every corner of it. Claude could not paint a storm; Turner's sea storms are the finest ever painted; and though Claude is best seen in tranquil sunshine, yet there are many beautiful and brilliant mid-day appearances, of perfect stillness, that were never seen on canvass, till Turner gave them with a power precluding all imitation; and I can well believe, with Mr. Ruskin, in the truth of his Venetian scenes, those splendid palaces and churches under the brightest skies and reflected in the clearest waters. Others may have painted with more truth many of the lesser facts, but he alone has given the great facts that are the prevailing associations with Venice. I have never seen Switzerland; but I have known those who have gone there sceptics, with respect to Turner's excellence, and returned worshippers; and I know enough of lake scenery to feel how great a painter he is of mountains and lakes, with all their changes of sunshine, cloud, and mist. Such are the things which are the real praise of this wonderful painter of light and space and air.

I have read with attention Mr. Ruskin's remarks on Turner's trees and foliage, but without being convinced that he was so great a painter of these as of other

features of Nature. With the exception of here and there a willow, and, in his Italian views, the frequent pine and cypress, I look in vain for a specific discrimination in his trees, or in the vegetation of his foregrounds, in which there is little that is English. I cannot remember an oak, an elm, an ash, or a beech, in any picture by him (only a fine decayed oak in one of his vignettes), nor do I remember anything much like the beauty of an English hedge. Neither has he expressed the deep fresh verdure of his own country; and hence he is the most unfaithful (among great painters) to the essential and most beautiful characteristics of English midland scenery. Constable said to me, "Did you ever see a picture by Turner, and not wish to possess it?" I forget the reply, but I might have named his view from the terrace at Richmond; from which, with the exception of the general composition, every beauty of that noble landscape is left out. I remember, in a summer of unusual drought, when the trees became embrowned and the grass was burnt up, that the colour of the woods and meadows seen from Richmond approached to that of Turner's picture; but I never remember to have met with trees of such forms as those which he has placed in its foreground, in any part of the world; nor am I acquainted, in Nature, with those trees often to be seen in his middle distances, which Mr. Ruskin accurately describes as shaped like pears with the stem downwards.

But there is no end to this kind of criticism, either of Turner or of any other great painter; and though there may be instruction in it, it seems ungracious to-

wards those who have done so much to delight us; and indeed even all the faults that the most microscopic dissection can detect in the few painters who stand in the highest rank are not condemnatory; for it is easy to imagine a style without one of their faults, and with no flagrant violation of the truth of Nature, which yet may be insipid, common-place, and valueless compared with theirs. I remember a poet, now remembered by nobody, or rather a writer of verse, who placed himself higher than Lord Byron, because as he said (and truly) he never wrote an immoral line, and filled his pages with recommendations of everything virtuous.

There is a place among our painters which Turner left unoccupied, and which neither Wilson, Gainsborough, Cozens, or Girtin so completely filled as John Constable. He was the most genuine painter of English cultivated scenery, leaving untouched its mountains and lakes. Having characterised his peculiar powers, as well as I could, when I printed a collection of his letters, I shall now confine myself to a notice of Mr. Ruskin's remarks on him. In the preface to "Modern Painters," that gentleman says, "The feelings of Constable with respect to his art might be almost a model for the young student, were it not that they err a little on the other side,* and are perhaps in need of chastening and guiding from the works of his fellow-men. We should use pictures, not as authorities, but as comments on Nature, just as we use divines, not as authorities, but as comments on the Bible. Constable in his dread of saint-

* The quotation is from a note to a passage of which the genuine love of Nature by English artists is the subject.

worship, deprives himself of much instruction from the Scripture to which he holds, because he will not accept aid in reading it from the learning of other men."

How far this charge is just, the reader will determine when he is informed that Constable's first-known attempts in Art were pen-and-ink copies of the prints from Raphael's Cartoons; his next, copies of the etchings of Ruysdael; and that, later in life and occasionally towards the close of it, he made careful copies of Wilson, of Ruysdael, Rubens, Teniers, and Claude; copies, some of which might pass for the originals. His walls also were covered with pictures, drawings and prints, of the great landscape and other painters, and he venerated styles in Art that have been venerated by all the best artists, but of which Mr. Ruskin occasionally speaks with that ridicule which he so well knows how to use.

In another page of "Modern Painters," I read that "Unteachableness seems to have been a main feature of his" (Constable's) "character, and there is a corresponding want of veneration in the way he approaches Nature herself." The first of these charges, I think, has been sufficiently answered; and to the second I will oppose a quotation from one of Constable's lectures, and ask if the words are those of a man wanting in veneration of Nature. "The landscape painter," he says, "must walk in the fields with an humble mind. No arrogant man was ever permitted to see Nature in all her beauty. If I may be allowed to use a very solemn quotation, I would say most emphatically to the student, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'"

"His early education and associations," continues Mr. Ruskin, "were also against him—they induced a morbid preference of subjects of a low order." Constable's education was among farmers and millers, and I should say, therefore, not unfavourable to a painter of pastoral landscape; and whether his subjects are to be ranked as of a low order, or not, is a question of taste. The materials of which his landscapes are chiefly composed are thus enumerated by himself, in his description of "the scenes of his boyhood," which he was fond of saying "made him a painter." "Gentle declivities, luxuriant meadow flats, sprinkled with flocks and herds, well cultivated uplands, with numerous scattered villages and churches, with farms and picturesque cottages."

Another objection to his Art, that requires notice, is that Mr. Ruskin has "never seen any work of his in which there are any signs of his being able to draw;" and from this sentence I can only conclude that Mr. Ruskin has either never seen a genuine picture by Constable, and that his impression is derived from the numerous forgeries of his works in circulation, or that he has seen pictures by him, without *looking at* them, which often happens where we are not interested. Even in those late works in which Constable used the palette knife to excess, and in which, as was often the case with Turner, his mind was more intent on colour and effect than on form, there are always evidences of his power of accurate drawing; and I may add that his studies of clouds, of trees, of churches, mills, &c., show him to be as per-

fect a master of drawing as he was of colour and chiaro-scuro.

Having mentioned his use of the palette knife, I should state that he was himself aware he had done so to an excess. In a note to me, he said, "I have laid the palette knife down, but not until I had cut my own throat with it." The truth is, that the pictures in which he most used this instrument, are those of which there are the greatest number of forgeries. A practised eye will, however, generally detect these, as, in such imitations, one colour is smeared over another so as to have the muddled and filthy look of the rags with which a painter cleans his palette; while the dashes of colour from Constable's knife have the look of gems, and the more they are magnified the more brilliant they appear. His "Waterloo Bridge," of all his large pictures, the one in which it was most used, seems painted with liquid gold and silver. The palette knife appears everywhere, the *palette* nowhere. I must add to these remarks, that as Constable made a sketch of the full size of every large picture he painted, and as these sketches are complete in effect, though not in detail, they are sometimes mistaken for pictures, and a false notion is therefore conveyed of his Art. It is just possible that some of these may have given to Mr. Ruskin an impression of his want of reverence for Nature, though, considered as a means by which to make his pictures more perfect, they prove the reverse.

Mr. Ruskin alludes to the often repeated saying of Fuseli, and to which Constable himself first gave cur-

rency, but Mr. Ruskin shows a very limited acquaintance with Constable's works, when he calls his effects "great-coat weather and nothing more." Nobody has painted with more truth the finest English summer weather,—as in the "White Horse," "the Stratford Mill," "the Hay Wain," "the Waterloo Bridge," and others of his large pictures, and particularly in a little meadow scene, of matchless beauty, and the "Boat Building," both in the collection of Mr. Sheepshanks. Now none of these pictures have much of what are called warm colours; but they express the warmth of summer so truly that in some of them (the last two especially) I can fancy I see the tremulous vibration of the heated air near the ground. Constable never fell into the common mistake by which even Turner appears to have been influenced, namely, that what are called warm colours are essential to convey the idea of warmth in a landscape. The truth is, that red, orange, and yellow, are only seen in the sky at the coolest hours of the day, and brown and yellow tints, in the foliage of England, prevail only in the Spring and Autumn. But he fearlessly painted mid-summer noon-day heat, with blues, greens, and greys forming the predominant masses. And he succeeded; because his sensibility of eye directed him to the true tones and arrangements in Nature of these colours at the season he most loved to paint, and which he generally indicated by an elder tree in flower.

While speaking of the colour of Nature, I must not omit to notice a mistake painters, who theorise rather than observe, fall into, when they give a yellow tinge to all objects in noon-day sunshine, inferring that so it must

be because the local colour of the sun is yellow. But, in fact, excepting in the morning or evening, white, in sunshine, is only a purer white, and blue receives not the least tint of green; indeed in blue, even when lighted by the warmest setting sun, it is not easy to detect any change.

Having quoted, with dissent, some of Mr. Ruskin's remarks, I must in justice to that gentleman transcribe a passage in which he speaks of the Art of Constable as "thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool colour, and realising certain motives of English scenery with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire." Constable, in fact, practised more to the letter than any of his contemporaries what Mr. Ruskin insists on, with great spirit, in another page. "Whatever," he says, "is to be truly great and affecting must have on it the stamp of the native land. Not a law this, but a necessity, from the intense hold on their country of the affections of all truly great men. All classicality, all middle-age patent reviving, is utterly vain and absurd; if we are now to do anything great, good, awful, religious, it must be got out of our own little island, railroads and all." To this I heartily subscribe, and I wish also to be understood as fully sensible of the estimate of the high mission of Art which everywhere appears in the pages of a critic from whom I have received much instruction; and though I cannot agree with Mr. Ruskin in all things, I know no modern writer from whom so many maxims, valuable

in matters of taste, and often in higher things, may be quoted.

It is but a very small portion of the world's surface that has been cultivated, so to speak, by the landscape-painter, because, indeed, all Art has been confined within a very narrow geographical limit. The few transcripts of scenery that have been brought to Europe from distant lands are from the hands of amateurs or inferior painters who have been unable to express the truth of atmosphere, the greatest difficulty, as it is the most important of all the requisites of landscape Art, for without it we can never transport ourselves in imagination to the climes represented. Humboldt dwells eloquently on the magnificence of tropical landscape; but unless a Turner could visit the scenes he describes, and scarcely then, no European could receive anything like an impression of their splendour. The time may come when such scenery shall be truly painted, but this will not be till civilization and genuine Art are established in the midst of it, and even then a thorough appreciation of its beauties will only dwell with those who are native to it.

SECTION XVI.

ON PORTRAIT.

As often as I hear the annual protest against the preponderance of portraiture in the Academy,* I am inclined to say that the interest of the Exhibition can only be affected by the quality and not by the quantity of such Art; for I never saw so delightful a display of pictures as the assemblage of the works of Reynolds, in 1813, at the British Gallery; nearly all being portraits. Such Art as his requires, indeed, the highest powers of mind, hand, and eye; and I do not believe that when Raphael or Titian occasionally quitted History for Portrait, it occurred to them that they were descending to a lower sphere; and I am sure they did not find it easier to satisfy themselves. Art was not then classed as it now is. The great masters considered themselves as painters, not of this or that, but of every-

* When the Exhibition is condemned on account of the quantity of portrait, it is forgotten that if the painters of indifferent works of this class had employed themselves on subjects from poetry or history, or on landscape, the interest would not be greater. When bad portraits are better placed than good pictures of other classes, it is a just cause of complaint; and when indifferent pictures of other classes take the precedence of good portrait, the complaint is equally just.

thing; and as Poussin said of himself, they "neglected nothing."

There has never existed a great painter of History or Poetry who has not been great in portrait. Even Michael Angelo is no exception. There may not remain any *painted* portraits of known persons by his hand, but there are sculptured portraits by him, and it is impossible to look even at the *engravings* of the Prophets and Sibyls, without seeing that they are from a hand practised in portrait—a hand, too, that had acquired its power by the practice of literal exactness. "Fuseli distinguishes the styles—epic, dramatic, and historic, beautifully," says Mr. Haydon. But I think, as I do of such distinctions generally, that these are entirely imaginary; and that the style of Michael Angelo is distinguished, as are all others, by the peculiar mind of the artist *only*. Haydon adds that, "the same instruments are used in all styles, men and women; and no two men or women were ever the same in form, feature, or proportion. After Fuseli has said, 'the detail of character is not consistent with the epic,' he goes on to show the great difference of character between each Prophet, as decided as any character chosen by Raphael in any of his more essentially dramatic works. 'Nor are the Sibyls,' continues Fuseli, 'those female oracles, less expressive or less individually marked.'" Thus, though Haydon was unwilling to abandon the classifications of Fuseli, the contradiction involved in them did not escape him.

There cannot be a doubt that Michael Angelo, had he devoted himself to portrait only, would have been a

superlative portrait-painter; for in his works we find everything in perfection that portrait requires—dignity, the expression of character, the highest perception of beauty, in man, woman, and child; and not only in the unfinished marble that adorns our Academy library, but in the smaller compartments of the Sistine ceiling, the most natural and familiar domestic incidents treated in the most graceful manner. It is right this should be remembered, because painters (as they fancy themselves) of High Art, who really have not the talents portrait requires, must not be allowed to class themselves with Michael Angelo, as long as they *cannot do* what he, in perfection, *could do*.

Conspicuous as he stands among great portrait-painters, Vandyke is not first of the first. The attitudes of his single figures are often formal and unmeaning; and his groups, however finely connected by composition, are seldom connected by sentiment. Fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, stand or sit beside each other, as they stood or sat in his room, for the mere purpose of being painted; and it is therefore the nicely-discriminated individual character of every head, the freshness and delicacy of his colour, and the fine treatment of his masses, that have placed him high among portrait-painters. The Countess of Bedford, at Petworth, his Snyders at Castle Howard, his whole lengths at Warwick and at Windsor, the noble equestrian picture at Blenheim, of Charles I., with its magnificent landscape background, and the whole length of Charles in the Louvre, are among the masterpieces of Vandyke; but he has nowhere shown such dramatic powers as are dis-



A GROUP—by Michael Angelo.



THE SURRENDER OF BRÉDA—by VELASQUEZ.

played by Velasquez, in his portrait picture of "The Surrender of Breda."

The Governor of the town is presenting its keys to the Marquis Spinola, who (hat in hand) neither takes them, nor allows his late antagonist to kneel. But, laying his hand gently on his shoulder, he seems to say, "fortune has favoured me, but our cases might have been reversed." To paint such an act of generous courtesy was worthy of a contemporary of Cervantes. It is not, however, in the choice of the subject, but in the manner in which he has brought the scene before our eyes, that the genius and mind of Velasquez are shown. The cordial unaffected bearing of the conqueror could only have been represented by as thorough a gentleman as himself. I know this picture but from copies. Mr. Ford says of the original, "Never were knights, soldiers, or national character better painted, or the heavy Fleming, the intellectual Italian, and the proud Spaniard more nicely marked, even to their boots and breeches; the lances of the guards actually vibrate. Observe the contrast of the light-blue delicate page, with the dark, iron-clad General, Spinola, who, the model of a high-bred generous warrior, is consoling a gallant but vanquished enemy.*

Another great portrait picture, the conception of

* Of Spinola, Mr. Ford adds:—"He was another of those many foreigners who having borne the war brunt and gained victories for Spain, have been rewarded with ingratitude. He took Breda, June 2, 1652, and died five years afterwards broken hearted, exclaiming, 'They have robbed me of honour!' Velasquez has introduced his own noble head into this picture, which is placed in the corner with a plumed hat."

which is equally dramatic and original, is at Windsor Castle. The Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and the Prince of Spain, mounted on chargers, are directing an assault in the battle of Nortlingen. The conventional manner, sanctioned indeed by great painters, of representing commanders of armies, whether mounted or on foot, quietly looking out of the picture, while the battle rages behind them, is here set aside. The generals are riding into the scene of action; and yet their attitudes are so contrived as sufficiently to show their features. Nearer to the spectator are half-length figures, the end of a long line of steel-clad infantry, diminishing in perspective up a hill to the fortress they are storming. All is action; and, though we are only shown the generals and the common soldiers, yet, as the horses of the former are in profile, and have just come into the picture, we may imagine a train of attendant officers about to appear; and though portrait was the first object of Rubens, the picture is a noble representation of a battle. The conception, as regards the foot soldiers, has been imitated, though differently applied, by Opie; and probably Raphael's composition in the Vatican, representing David gazing at Bathsheba, while the troops of Uriah pass below him, suggested it to Rubens.

The pendant to this picture is the group of Sir Balthasar Gerbier, his wife, and children; which Dr. Waagen inclines to attribute to Vandyke. But the arrangement and dramatic connection of the figures is entirely free from the formality of Vandyke; and a

comparison of this fine composition with Vandyke's "Children of Charles I." at Windsor, his "Pembroke Family" at Wilton, his "Earl and Countess of Derby" belonging to Lord Clarendon, or "The Nassau Family" at Penshanger, will show that it is by Rubens.

Perhaps the noblest group of portraits ever painted, for it is considered the greatest work of its class by Titian, is that of the male part of the family of Luigi Cornaro. The fine old man, whose life by an extraordinary system of temperance was protracted to a hundred years, kneels before an altar in the open air, followed by his son-in-law and grand-children, except the three youngest, who are sitting on the steps of the altar playing with a little dog, an incident like some I have noticed in the works of Raphael. The characteristic arrangement of the figures, the noble simplicity of the lines, and the truth and power of the colour, unite in placing this picture on the summit of Art. There is no apparent sacrifice of detail, no trick, that we can discover, to give supremacy to the heads, which yet rivet our attention at the first glance, and to which we return again and again, impressed by the thought and mind in the countenances of the elder personages, and charmed with the youthful innocence of the boys. I have seen people, ignorant of the principles of Art, and caring little about pictures, stand before this one in astonishment, and I have heard them express themselves in a way which proved that little of its excellence was lost on them. Fortunately

for England, it belongs to his Grace the Duke o Northumberland.*

There was a time when kings, warriors, and other eminent persons were painted, almost as a matter of course, in devotional attitudes. It was, in fact, a fashion, and was continued to a later date than the close of Titian's life. But it is not so much what the individual painted may be doing, as its consistency with his whole life, and the look and manner given him by the painter, which interests or offends us. The piety of a kneeling hero may be ostentatious; or we might happen to know that devotion was all the religion he practised, and that he was lifting to Heaven hands that had been steeped, and were again to be steeped, in innocent blood. Sir Thomas More was several times painted by Holbein, yet never, that I recollect, in an attitude of devotion, or accompanied by any symbol of that religion which was the rule of his life; and what would the memory of More, or the genius of Holbein, have gained had he so painted him? Raphael flattered Leo the Tenth, as he was directed, by introducing him, in the "Attila," as Leo the First. But when he was to paint a more characteristic portrait of the Pope, he represented only the sovereign and the dilettante. Leo is examining with a glass a spendidly-illuminated manuscript. He sits

* Barry speaks of it as having been ruined by a picture-cleaner. But he was wholly mistaken; no picture of Titian is in a finer condition, and it would be fortunate if all were so well preserved.

in a chair of state, attended, not by saints, but by two princes of the church; and the portrait is, as all portraits should be, biographical. Even in copies (from which only I know it), I fancy I see faint indications of a love of fun, so characteristic of a Pontiff who delighted in a practical joke.

The admirers of devotional portrait object to the more modern custom of indicating the deeds of the person represented, as savouring of vanity; forgetting that acts of devotion are deeds, and as far as attitude and expression have to do with devotion, the easiest of all deeds; and when consisting in these alone, the most criminal of all vanities. The only portrait of that admirable woman Margaret Tudor, represents her in a religious habit, with her hands joined in prayer, and she could not have been so characteristically handed down to us in any other dress or attitude. Neither could Sir Joshua's portrait of General Eliott be more happily conceived than it is. The key of the fortress he is defending is held firmly in his hand. But commanding as are the air and attitude, they have nothing of the vanity of bravado; indeed, if what is most honourable to the man should not be painted, the world would not have possessed the noble conception of Velasquez that has been described.

What may be called masquerading or fancy ball portrait is seldom happy; and though we do not object to Sir Joshua's "Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra," or "Emily Bertie as Thais," yet, as in such cases, let us be sure the assumed character accords with the real one. Sir Thomas Lawrence made a sketch of George the Fourth

in the armour of the Black Prince, but had the good sense not to carry the matter further than a sketch.

Are portrait-painters, it may be asked, to paint the vices of their sitters? Assuredly, if these vices exhibit themselves in the countenance. And Fuseli praises Titian for expressing some of the most odious individual characteristics, in portraits that he selects as works of the highest order.

Allan Cunningham accuses Reynolds of flattery, and I apprehend Sir Joshua was just as much of a flatterer as Titian. With a vulgar head before him, he would not, or rather *could* not, make a vulgar picture. But I do not believe that he would have given to Colonel Charteris "an aspect worthy a President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice," unless, which is not impossible, he had such an aspect. In his whole length of the Duke of Orleans, the debauchee was as apparent as the Prince.*

No man can be a good portrait-painter who is not a good physiognomist. I do not mean that he should know Lavater by heart, or that he must believe in all that phrenology assumes. But he must be, what all of us are, in some degree, a judge of character by the signs exhibited in the face. A few of the broad distinctions of physiognomy depend on the forms of the features, but all its nicer shades have far more to do with expression; and in this, indeed, the real character is often seen where the conformation of the

* This very fine picture, which I remember at the British Gallery in 1813, was destroyed by fire. A large engraving, and some good copies of it, exist.

features seems to contradict it. Socrates had the face and figure of a Silenus, but the great mind of the philosopher must have been visible, through the disguise, to all who could read expression. There are some general and well-known rules for the determination of physiognomical character, as far as it has to do with the shapes of the features; the aquiline nose and eye, for instance, belong to the heroic class, thick lips to the sensual, and thin to the selfish; yet all these may be liable to many exceptions; the first certainly are; for Nelson, Wolfe, Turenne, and many other heroes, will occur to our recollection who had nothing of the eagle physiognomy. It is natural to associate beauty with goodness, and ugliness with wickedness; and children generally do this. But an acquaintance with the world soon shows us that bad and selfish hearts may be concealed under the handsomest features, and the highest virtues hidden under the homeliest; and that goodness may even consist with conformations of face absolutely ugly. We then begin to look for the character in the expression rather than in the forms of the features, and to distinguish assumed expressions from natural ones; and so we go on, and, as we grow older, become better physiognomists, though we never arrive at that certainty of judgment which seems not to be intended we ever should.

The best portrait-painters, though they may not have penetrated through the mask to *all* beneath it, have, by the fidelity of their Art, given resemblances that sometimes correct and sometimes confirm the verdicts of historians. Who can look at Vandyke's

three heads,* painted to enable Bernini to make a bust, and believe all that has been said against Charles I.? Or who can look at Holbein's portraits of Henry VIII., and doubt the worst that has been said of his selfish cruelty?

Among the many excellences of Holbein, his treatment of the hands is not the least; and it is evident that in his whole-lengths of Henry, they are portraits, and so are the legs, and that the king stood for the entire figure in that characteristic, but by no means graceful attitude, in which he set the fashion to his courtiers. We feel that we could swear to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of such portraits.

Among the pictures at Hampton Court attributed to Holbein, few can be relied on as genuine. I cannot believe that those historical curiosities, "The Embarkation of Henry VIII. from Dover," "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," "The Meeting of Henry and Maximilian," or "The Battle of the Spurs" are his works; neither do I believe he painted the picture that includes Henry, Jane Seymour, Prince Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth, nor the life-sized whole-length of "The Earl of Surry." According to the general custom of attributing the portraits of every age to the greatest master of that age, Holbein is made answerable for these, and many others, greatly inferior to the picture, certainly by him, belonging to the Surgeon Barbers' Company; a work rivalling Titian in its colour, and in the finely-marked individual character of the heads. It is remarkable

* At Windsor Castle, and inimitably engraved by Sharp.

that, although it has hung in the very heart of London,* for more than three hundred years, it has not in the least suffered from smoke; and if it has ever been cleaned, it has sustained no injury from the process.† Dr. Waagen urges the importance of so fine a picture being removed to the National Gallery, and thinks an arrangement might be made to that purpose, between the Government and the company that possesses it; "a consummation devoutly to be wished." There is not a Holbein in the National Gallery.

While speaking of this great painter, I must not omit to notice the interest given to his picture of the family of Sir Thomas More, by making the background an exact representation of an apartment in More's house. This example might effect a great improvement in portrait, and it would often be found easier to the painter (as well as far more agreeable), to copy realities, than to weary himself with ineffectual attempts to make the eternal pillar and curtain, or the conventional sky and tree, look as well as they do in the backgrounds of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

The question relating to the degree in which personal defects are to be marked must, in every case, be settled by the taste of the painter. Reynolds has not only shown that Baretti was near-sighted, but he

* The Surgeon-Barbers' Hall escaped the great fire.

† I believe that when pictures in the National Gallery have required cleaning, the necessity has arisen from the deepening of yellow varnishes, and those other obscurations of which I have already spoken, rather than from the smoke of London, which may be easily washed off without removing the original varnish.

has made that defect as much the subject of the picture as the sitter himself, and Baretti's absorption in his book strongly marks the literary man. But near-sightedness is not a deformity, and there can be no doubt that Reynolds abated whatever of malformation he might not for the sake of individuality think it right to exclude, and that he also invariably softened harshness of feature or expression, and diminished positive ugliness, as far as he could do so without losing character. Chantrey did the same; but Lawrence softened harshness so much as often to lose character. The portraits of neither of the three could ever be called ridiculously like, an expression sometimes used in the way of compliment, but in reality pointing exactly to what a portrait should not be; and Wilkie felt this so much that he went to the other extreme, and even deviated into unlikeness in his portraits, from the dread of that un-ideal mode of representation which excites us to laugh.

We undervalue that which costs us least effort, and West, while engaged on a small picture of his own family, little thought how much it would surpass in interest many of his more ambitious works. Its subject is the first visit of his father and elder brother, to his young wife, after the birth of her second child. They are Quakers; and the venerable old man and his eldest son wear their hats, according to the custom of their sect. Nothing can be more beautifully conceived than the mother bending over the babe, sleeping in her lap. She is wrapped in a white dressing-gown, and her other son, a boy of six years old, is leaning on the



THE ANATOMIST NICHOLAS TULP AND HIS PUPILS—by REMBRANDT

arm of her chair. West stands behind his father, with his palette and brushes in his hand, and the silence that reigns over the whole is that of religious meditation; which will probably end, according to the Quaker custom, in a prayer from the patriarch of the family. The picture is a very small one, the engraving from it being of the same size. It has no excellence of colour, but the masses of light and shadow are impressive and simple, and I know not a more original illustration of the often-painted subject, the ages of man. Infancy, childhood, youth, middle life, and extreme age are beautifully brought together in the quiet chamber of the painter's wife. Had he been employed to paint these five ages, he would perhaps have given himself a great deal of trouble to produce a work that would have been classical, but, compared with this, common-place; while he has here succeeded in making a picture which, being intended only for himself, is for that reason a picture for the whole world; and if painters could always thus put their hearts into their work, how much would the general interest of the Art be increased!

Among the many great lessons in portrait composition, by Rembrandt, are "The Night Watch" at Amsterdam, "The Group of Surgeons assembled round a Corpse," in the Musée at the Hague; and the picture which Mr. Smith, in his "Catalogue Raisonné," calls "Ranier Hanslo and his Mother." A sight of the two first is well worth a journey to Holland. The last is sometimes described as "a woman consulting a Baptist minister," and at others, "a woman consulting an eminent lawyer, or an eminent physician." As there

are large books on a table and in the background, and the expressions of the heads are earnest and serious, the subject might be either of these. I saw the picture (which belongs to the Earl of Ashburnham), many years ago, and have ever since been haunted with the wish to see it again. Indeed I was about to make a day's journey for that sole purpose, when it was sent to London for sale.* The persons it represents are unknown, the heads of neither are remarkable for beauty or any other interest than that marked individuality that carries with it a certainty of likeness; and yet it is a picture that throws down every barrier that would exclude it from the highest class of Art; nor do I know anything from the hand of Rembrandt in which he appears greater than in this simple and unpretending work. I remember being surprised to hear Sir Thomas Lawrence object to its treatment, that though the man turns towards the woman, and is speaking earnestly, while she is listening with great attention, yet they do not look in each other's faces. I was surprised that he should not have noticed how frequently this happens, in conversations on the most important subjects, and oftenest, indeed, in such conversations. Rembrandt has repeated these attitudes and expressions, in the two principal personages in "The Night Watch," with the difference only, that the figures are walking as they converse. There is an engraving of the "Hanslo and his Mother" by Josiah Boydell, which, however, fails in giving the breadth of

* Every artist who then saw it, hoped it would be secured for the National Gallery.

light on the female head, the colour of which is as near to perfection as Art ever approached.

The hands in Rembrandt's portraits, as in those of Holbein, do everything required of them in the most natural and expressive way. But very different are the hands of Vandyke, which have an affected grace adopted from Rubens, though carried further from Nature, and which may be traced from Rubens to Coreggio. The hands in Vandyke's portraits are always of one type, thin and elegant, with long tapered fingers. He was followed in these particulars by Lely with still more of affectation, who carried a corresponding mannerism into his faces, losing nearly all individuality in that one style of beauty that was in fashion.

A nobleman said to Lely, "How is it that you have so great a reputation, when you know, as well as I do, that you are no painter?" "True, but I am the best you have," was the answer. And so it is; the best artist of the age will generally, while living, have a reputation equal to the greatest that have preceded him. Lely, however, *was* a painter, and of very great merit. His colour, always pearly and refined, is often very charming. He understood well the treatment of landscape as background, and there are some of his pictures which I prefer to some pictures by Vandyke.

Sir Joshua Reynolds remarks that in general the greatest portrait-painters have not copied closely the dresses of their time. Holbein, however, took no liberties with the doublets, hose, or mantles of the gentlemen he painted, nor with the head-gear or kirtles of the ladies; neither did Velasquez; and their portraits are, therefore,

curious records of fashions, picturesque, and sometimes fantastic in extreme, yet always treated with admirable Art; and I confess I prefer those of Sir Joshua's portraits in which he has faithfully adhered to the dress of the sitter; which is always characteristic, and often highly so. The manner in which Queen Elizabeth covered herself with jewels, and the splendour with which Raleigh decorated his person, pertain to biography.

In some of Vandyke's portraits, no change is made in the dress; while in many (I believe the most), that which is stiff and formal is loosened, and alterations are introduced that we are only aware of when we compare his pictures with exact representations, by other artists, of the costume of the time. Such deviations from matter of fact were carried much further by Lely and Kneller, particularly in their portraits of ladies; and the first adopted an elegant, but impossible, undress, that assists the voluptuous expression which he aimed at, either to please a dissolute Court, or because it pleased himself; possibly for both reasons.

With Kneller, however, the ideal style of the dress does not affect the prevailing character he gave to the beauties he painted, who seem a higher order of beings than the ladies of Lely. Among the attractions of the latter the expression of strict virtue is by no means conspicuous, while it would seem profane to doubt the purity of the high-born dames of Kneller. Though, as a painter, not to be compared to Lely, his women seem secured from moral degradation by an ever-present consciousness of noble birth, which sits well on them; and though their demeanour is as studied as the grace of a minuet,

it does not offend like vulgar affectation. Fielding, the natural Fielding, greatly admired the stately beauties of Kneller, at Hampton Court, and compared Sophia Western to one of them. Conscious that, "when unadorned, adorned the most," they reject the aid of jewellery, and are content with only so much assistance from Art, as they receive from well-arranged draperies.

The great fault of Lely is the family likeness, closer than that of sisters, which forbids our relying on his pictures as portraits; and this unpardonable fault is carried even further by Kneller, whose ladies are all cast in one mould of feature and form, and all alike tall to a degree rare in nature.

Reynolds adopted something from both which he used to advantage; but he did far more,—he recovered portrait from all the mannerism that had accumulated on it, from the death of Vandyke to his own time, and restored it to truth.

When we compare his style with that of his master, Hudson, we are struck with its vast superiority, its wide difference, not merely in degree, but in kind; and in this it would appear to form an exception to what has generally been the case, namely, that the style of every extraordinary genius is but a great improvement on that of the school in which he was reared. But it was not from Hudson, nor from his visit to Italy, that the Art of Reynolds was formed. The seed that was to produce fruit, so excellent and abundant, was sown before he quitted Devonshire. He there saw, and probably among the first pictures he ever saw, the works of a painter wholly unknown in the metropolis. "This

painter," Northcote tells us, "was William Gandy, of Exeter, whom," he says, "I cannot but consider as an early master of Reynolds. He told me himself that he had seen portraits by Gandy equal to those of Rembrandt; one in particular of an alderman of Exeter, which is placed in a public building in that city. I have also heard him repeat some observations of Gandy's, which had been mentioned to him, and that he approved of; one in particular was, that a picture ought to have a richness in its texture, as if the colours had been composed of cream or cheese, and the reverse of a hard and husky or dry manner." Now a single precept like this falling into an ear fitted to receive it, is sufficient to create a style; while, upon the inapt, all the best instruction that can be given is wasted.

I have seen a portrait by Gandy, which I should have mistaken for an early work of Reynolds; and this, with what Northcote tells us, is enough to establish, in my mind, Gandy's claim to the honour of being the first instructor of a great genius whom he never saw. Gandy's father was a pupil of Vandyke; and being patronized by the Duke of Ormond, and retained in his service in Ireland, his works were as little known in London as those of his son, who practised only in Devonshire. Thus, while the style of Vandyke degenerated through the hands of his successors in the Capital, till it was totally lost in the beginning of the eighteenth century, some of its best qualities were preserved in remote parts of the kingdom, to lead to a splendid revival of portraiture; so true it is that however obscured from sight, at times, some of the

links in the chain of Art may be, still it is a chain never wholly broken.

Nothing can be further from my intention than to lessen the fame of Reynolds. What I have stated merely shows what indeed we might be certain of without a knowledge of the facts, namely, that the birth of his Art was not miraculous. Praise enough is still left for him; for that which he derived from Gandy was but the medium of his own fascinating conceptions of Nature. "There is a charm," says Northcote, "in his portraits, a mingled softness and force, a grasping at the end with nothing harsh or unpleasant in the means, that you will find nowhere else. He may go out of fashion for a time, but you must come back to him again, while a thousand imitators and academic triflers are forgotten."

In looking over prints from his works, we are astonished at the many attitudes and incidents we find new to Art, and yet often such as from their very familiarity in life have been overlooked by other painters. The three Ladies Waldegrave, one winding silk from the hands of another, while the third is bending over a drawing, Mrs. Abington leaning on the back of her chair, and Lady Fenoulhet with her hands in a muff, for instance; and then the many exquisitely natural groupings of mothers and children, and of children with children; how greatly superior in interest are such conceptions, fresh from Nature, to some of his inventions,—as of ladies sacrificing to the Graces, or decorating a statue of Hymen, of which indeed he made fine pictures (for that he could not help),

but pictures the impression of which is comparatively languid.

In the collected works of no other portrait-painter do we find so great a diversity of individual character illustrated by so great a variety of natural incident, or aided by such various and well-chosen effects of light and shadow; many entirely new to Art, as (for instance) the partial shadows thrown by branches of trees over whole-length figures. Indeed, by no other painter, except Gainsborough, has landscape been so beautifully or effectively brought in aid of portrait. Vandyke generally subdues its brightness to give supremacy to the head, and Lely and Kneller did this still more; but Reynolds, without lessening its power, always contrived it so as to relieve the face most effectively.

We may learn nearly everything relating to portrait from Reynolds. Those deviations from the exact correspondence of the sides of the face which are so common, in Nature, are never corrected by him, as they sometimes are by inferior artists under the notion of improving the drawing. He felt that a marked difference in the lines surrounding the eyes often greatly aids the expression of the face. He took advantage of this in painting the fixed despair of Ugolino, no doubt finding it in the model; and in a very different head, his front face of Garrick, he has, by observing the difference of the eyes, given great archness of expression, and assisted its intelligence without making the face less handsome.

It has been said, and I believe it, that no painter can put more sense into a head than he possesses himself,

and it must have been rare for Reynolds to meet with an intellect superior to his own. Had we no other evidence, that of Goldsmith, who knew him well, was a close observer, and no flatterer, would be conclusive:—

> "Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
> He has not left a wiser or better behind."

But his portraits were not always so satisfactory to his sitters as the works of inferior painters. The truth is, sitters are no judges of their own likenesses, and in their immediate family circle the best judges are not always to be found. Lord Thurlow said, "There are two factions, the Reynolds faction and the Romney faction. I am of the Romney faction." Now in Romney's whole-length the Chancellor appeared a more handsome man than in the half-length of Reynolds. Romney avoided all indication of the suppressed temper that was so apt to explode in violent paroxysms, and this rendered his picture more acceptable to the original. But he missed what Reynolds alone could give—that extraordinary sapience which made Charles Fox say, "No man could be so wise as Lord Thurlow looked."

That the portraits of Reynolds were the best of all likenesses, I have no manner of doubt. I know several of his pictures of children, the originals of whom I have seen in middle and old age, and in every instance I could discover much likeness. He painted Lord Melbourne when a boy, and with that genuine laugh that was so characteristic of the future Prime Minister at every period of his life; and no likeness between

a child and a man of sixty (an age at which I remember Lord Melbourne) was ever more striking. Lord Melbourne recollected that Sir Joshua bribed him to sit, by giving him a ride on his foot, and said, "If you behave well you shall have another ride."

His fondness of children is recorded on all his canvasses in which they appear. A matchless picture of Miss Bowls, a beautiful laughing child caressing a dog, was sold a few years ago at auction, and cheaply, at a thousand guineas. The father and mother of the little girl intended she should sit to Romney, who, at one time, more than divided the town with Reynolds. Sir George Beaumont, however, advised them to employ Sir Joshua. "But his pictures fade." "No matter, take the chance; even a faded picture by Reynolds will be the finest thing you can have. Ask him to dine with you; and let him become acquainted with her." The advice was taken; the little girl was placed beside Sir Joshua at the table, where he amused her so much with tricks and stories that she thought him the most charming man in the world, and the next day was delighted to be taken to his house, where she sat down with a face full of glee, the expression of which he caught at once and never lost; and the affair turned out every way happily, for the picture did not fade, and has, till now, escaped alike the inflictions of time or of the ignorant among cleaners.

Doubts have been expressed of the sincerity of Sir Joshua's great admiration of Michael Angelo. Had he, on his return from Italy, undertaken to decorate a church (supposing an opportunity) with imitations of the Sistine

ceiling, I should doubt his appreciation of the great works that cover it. But a painter may sincerely admire Art very different from his own; and I rest my belief of his full appreciation of Michael Angelo, less on his "Tragic Muse" (Mrs. Siddons), or his "Ugolino," both of which we may in some degree trace among the conceptions in the Sistine Chapel, than to that general greatness and grace of style stamped on all his works. "Reynolds,"—says Sterne, "great and graceful as he paints;" nor could his Art be so well characterized by any other two words.

It has been more than once intimated that Reynolds cared for no other artist's success. But if this were the case, why did he take the trouble to write and deliver his discourses? in which he did not fail to give all the instruction he could convey, by words, in his own branch of the Art, as well as in those which he considered higher. He was daily accessible to all young artists who sought his advice, and readily lent them the finest of his own works; but in doing this he always said to the portrait-painter, "It will be better for you to study Vandyke." It is clear that, though he felt his own superiority among his contemporaries, he had a belief that British Art was advancing, and that he should be surpassed by future painters; like the belief in which Shakespear supposes an ideal mistress to say of himself,—

"But since he died, and poets better prove,"

for Reynolds, like all men of the loftiest minds, was modest. Mrs. Bray, in her "Life of Stothard," says,

with great truth, of the modesty of such men, that it "is not at all inconsistent with that strong internal conviction, which every man of real merit possesses, respecting his own order of capacity. He feels that Nature has given him a stand on higher ground than most of his contemporaries; but he does not look down on them, but above himself. What he does is great, but he still feels that greatness has a spirit which is ever mounting—that rests on no summit within mortal view, but soars again and again in search of an ideal height on which to pause and fold its wings."

Gainsborough was the most formidable rival of Reynolds. Whether he felt it hopeless to make use of Sir Joshua's weapons, or whether his peculiar taste led him to the choice of other means; he adopted a system of chiaro-scuro, of more frequent occurrence in Nature than those extremes of light and dark which Reynolds managed with such consummate judgment. His range in portrait was more limited, but within that range he is at times so delightful that we should not feel inclined to exchange a head by him for a head of the same person by Sir Joshua. His men are as thoroughly gentlemen, and his women as entirely ladies, nor had Reynolds a truer feeling of the charms of infancy. Indeed his cottage children are more interesting because more natural than the "Robinettas" and "Muscipulas" of his illustrious rival, the only class of pictures by Reynolds in which mannerism in expression and attitude obtrudes itself in the place of what is natural. Gainsborough's barefoot child on her way to the well, with her little dog under her arm, is unequalled by any-

thing of the kind in the world. I recollect it at the British Gallery, forming part of a very noble assemblage of pictures, and I could scarcely look at or think of anything else in the rooms. This inimitable work is a portrait, and not of a peasant child, but of a young lady, who appears also in his picture of the girl and pigs, which Sir Joshua purchased.

That Reynolds and Gainsborough were not on terms of friendship seems to have been the fault of the latter, who, with all his excellent qualities, had not so equal a temper as Sir Joshua. Reynolds did not, as Allan Cunningham intimates, wait till the death of Gainsborough to do justice to his genius. The brief allusion to their last interview in his fourteenth discourse, which is as modest as it is touching, proves that he had not done so; and it seems clear that Sir Joshua would have told much more had it not been to his own honour, and that he has only said what he felt necessary for the removal of any charge of injustice on his part.

The powers of Gainsborough, in portrait, may be well estimated by that charming picture in the Dulwich Gallery, of "Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell;" and the whole-lengths at Hampton Court, of "Colonel St. Leger," and "Fisher the Composer."

A painter may have great ability, and yet be inferior to those of whom I have spoken. Sir Thomas Lawrence was perhaps hindered from rising to the highest rank as a colourist by his early and first practice of making portraits in colourless chalk only. His wish to please the sitter made him yield more than his English predecessors had done to the foolish desire of most

people to be painted with a smile: though he was far from extending this indulgence to that extreme of a self-satisfied simper that the French painters of the age preceding his, had introduced to portrait. Of indefatigable industry, Lawrence's habit of undertaking too many pictures at the same time was a serious drawback, in many cases, to their excellence. He began the portraits of children which he did not finish till they were grown up, and of gentlemen and ladies, while their hair was of its first colour, but which remained incomplete in his rooms, till the originals were grey. The most beautiful of his female heads, and beautiful it is, is the one he painted of Lady Elizabeth Leveson Gower (afterwards Marchioness of Westminster). This was begun and finished off-hand; and so was the best male head he ever painted, his first portrait of Mr. West, not the whole-length in the National Gallery, in which he has much exaggerated the stature of the original. He took especial delight in painting the venerable and amiable President, who offered a remarkable instance of what has been described in another section, the increase of beauty in old age, and of whom this portrait is a work of great excellence.

Without any of those peculiar blandishments of manner, either as a painter or a man, that contributed to make Lawrence the most popular portrait-painter of his time, Jackson was more of an artist; much truer in colour, and, indeed, in this respect approaching to Reynolds, whose pictures he sometimes copied so closely as to deceive even Northcote. When his sitters were ordinary people, his portraits were often ordinary

works; but when they were notable persons, he exerted all his powers. The portrait he painted of Canova, for Chantrey, is in all respects superior to that which Lawrence painted of the great sculptor; more natural, more manly, and much finer in effect. His heads of Sir John Franklin (painted for Mr. Murray), of Flaxman, of Stothard, and of Liston, are all admirably characteristic, and among the finest portraits of the British school; and I remember seeing at Castle Howard his half-length of Northcote hanging in company with Vandyke's half-length of Snyders, and a magnificent head of a Jew Rabbi, by Rembrandt, and well sustaining so trying a position. Perfectly amiable in his nature, nothing pleased Jackson more than opportunities of recommending young painters of merit to patronage; and he introduced Wilkie and Haydon to Lord Mulgrave and Sir George Beaumont. With strong natural sense, playful in his manner, and with a true relish of humour, Jackson was a great favourite with all who had the happiness to know him, and his loss, by an early death, was irreparable to his friends, and a very great one to Art.

The many advantages in many ways, resulting from Photography, are yet but imperfectly appreciated; for its improvements have followed each other so rapidly, that we cannot but expect many more, and are quite in the dark as to what may be its next wonder. In its present state it confirms what has always been felt by the best artists and the best critics, that fac-simile is not that species of resemblance to Nature, even in a portrait, that is most agreeable: for while the best

calotypes remind us of mezzotint engravings from Velasquez, Rembrandt, or Reynolds, they are still inferior in general effect to such engravings: and they thus help to show that the ideal is equally a principle of portrait-painting as of all other Art; and that not only does this consist in the best view of the face, the best light and shadow, and the most characteristic attitude of the figure, for all these may be selected for a photographic picture, but that the ideal of a portrait, like the ideal of all Art, depends on something which can only be communicated by the mind, through the hand and eye, and without any other mechanical intervention than that of the pencil. Photography may tend to relax the industry of inferior painters, but it may be hoped and reasonably expected that it will stimulate the exertions of the best; for much may be learnt from it if used as a means of becoming better acquainted with the beauties of Nature, but nothing if resorted to only as a substitute for labour. I have alluded to its value in enabling artists to possess fac-similes of expensive engravings; and the reader will have noticed that I have availed myself of its assistance in illustrating some of my remarks on Rembrandt.

CONCLUSION.

In taking leave of the reader, and supposing that I am addressing a young painter, I have a few more things to say, in the way of counsel.

When you begin to tire of your work, leave off; otherwise you will probably injure it—you will certainly injure yourself. I think it was Reynolds who said, "Do not be seen out of your painting-room in the day-time." But there is as much to be learned in our walks, as in our houses, and more health to be gained. Reynolds lost his sight and shortened his days by over-confinement, while Stothard preserved his health and lengthened his life by daily walks. To those who are ready to take advantage of any excuse for quitting their work, neither this nor anything I have to say is addressed. But I imagine you to be one whose eyes are always and everywhere employed; one on whom nothing that offers itself to notice is ever lost; one with whom the study of all Nature and of all Art is a labour of love;—and if you are not such a one, give up all thoughts of becoming a painter. "He," says Mr. Ruskin, "draws nothing well who thirsts not to draw everything."

Never destroy your designs, or your sketches from

Nature. Though you may (at the moment) be dissatisfied, a time will come when you will see them with other eyes, and discover how they may be turned to good account. With respect to your sketches, whether they be from Nature or designs for pictures, you will often find in them beauties that you cannot imitate when you attempt to finish. The usual reason given for the attractiveness of a sketch is, that the imagination fills it up more satisfactorily than the pencil ever can. There is something in this, but it is far from accounting for all the pleasure we derive from masterly sketches. Facility and ease of execution are, in themselves, attractive, but these are lesser matters; there is often a *one-ness* of effect, and a beauty and truth of colour, in a sketch, that are apt to be lost in the elaboration and timidity of finish;—and indeed I have noticed that the sketches of some painters have always more of true finish than their pictures, because they have more of those essentials to finish, unity and breadth. A student, to whom Sir Joshua Reynolds showed a fine picture by Poussin, pointed to a part that he thought bad. "No," said the President, "if it had been better, it had been worse." This seemed to the young man paradoxical; but I have no doubt Reynolds was right, and knew that what appeared desirable to the questioner (in all probability more of what he considered finish) would injure the picture.

It is not the length of time spent in study that is to make a painter of you, but *how* you spend that time. Try to keep in mind the greatest things, and secure these first. Some young painters waste that time in

the study of costume that should be spent in the study of Nature.—But remember that incorrectness in costume is not fatal, and, indeed, entire accuracy in this is impossible of attainment, excepting in subjects contemporary with the artist; but incorrectness of form, errors in perspective, and defective colour, are the things for which you will deservedly be brought to strict account. Haydon tells us that he resumed the study of the Greek language with the notion that it would enable him to paint the better from Homer. But he had the sense to discover that a sacrifice of time was too great, which, though it might possibly have made his pictures more Homeric, would certainly have made them less excellent in the qualities of Art, which he must have neglected, while engaged in the study of a language. Fuseli, it is true, was a scholar, and a good one, as well as a great painter. But his father and his earliest associates were literary men; and he was destined for the Church, sent to college, took orders, and preached, before he became a painter, though he had always wished to be one. Possibly he might have attained many of the things which (as an artist) he lacked, had he engaged in the profession sooner;—but, at any rate, his literary studies never interfered with his prosecution of Art, after he had determined on quitting the Church.

It is the happiness of a genuine painter that he is all his life a student. If the education of such a one could ever be finished, his Art would become little else than a mechanical routine exercise of the pencil, and he would sink into that large class who are dexterous

in everything and great in nothing. You may, by attending to all the common rules, become one of this class, and you may also (in this class) grow richer, than you have the chance of becoming while your mind is fixed on that high standard of excellence that the few only have reached. Make your election. But, if you have genius, it was made unconsciously in favour of the highest possible excellence, when you first gave up your mind to Painting, a time of life, perhaps, as early as your earliest recollections.

But though the education of a *true* painter is always going on, there is a time when he may be said to have taken a degree in Art. Do not before that time leave England,—do not leave London,—where all the best British artists have received the most valuable portion of their education. London contains every means that can assist the development of a painter's powers in whatever class of subjects he may be formed to excel; and as I have said in another page, an artist is always the better for being national. Travel as much as you please when you can call yourself a painter, for the more knowledge you take with you, doubly and trebly the more will you bring back. But remember that it is with the mind as with the body—both may be injured by too much food, and the health and strength of both are only promoted by moderate quantities, well digested.

Beware of over fastidiousness. I have known painters, of great delicacy of mind, in whom the difficulty of pleasing themselves has at last become a disease, that retarded, or prevented altogether, the completion of

really beautiful works. Never leave anything unaltered that you are tolerably sure of improving; but the propensity to alter may be indulged (if indeed it can be called an indulgence) much too far.

And now to *conclude* the conclusion. I must beg pardon of the reader if, as I fear, I have too often repeated opinions that seem to me important. I have reiterated passages, containing principles that I wished should not by any chance escape the reader, and that even if they had not escaped, should be again impressed on him. I am not so vain as to connect the name of Charles Fox with my own excepting with reference to what his friends considered a fault in his speeches, a habit of repeating his sentences, and for which he gave two reasons. "I do it," he said, "because I may not have been heard, and because I may have been heard."

THE END.

Woodfall and Kinder, Printers, Angel Court, Skinner Street, London.

CORRECTIONS.

Page 8, line 13th from the bottom of the page, after the words, "perpetuating motion and expression," insert "and which yet seem instantaneous."

Page 84, at the beginning of the third paragraph, leave out the words "The beauty and dignity superinduced by."

Page 178, line 6th from the top of the page, for "1852," read "1851."

Page 198, line 13th from the bottom of the page, for "Jericault's," read "Gericault's."

Page 229, line 10th from the top of the page, for "Sebastian, Riccis," read "Sebastian Riccis."

Page 259, line 10th from the top of the page, for "o ne," read "on the."

Page 290, line 7th from the bottom of the page, for "Surry," read "Surrey."


00081253

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016